BOSTON'S WORKERS
A LABOR HISTORY

JAMES R. GREEN
HUGH CARTER DONAHUE

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by

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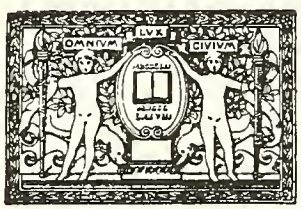

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Contents

Preface

This book examines some of the ways in which Boston's working people have made their own history in the past two hundred years. During the Bicentennial celebrations of 1976 the public heard much about the great white fathers of the American Revolution, but, with the exception of Paul Revere, little was said of the farmers, artisans, and laborers who were the foot soliders in the war against British tyranny which began in the Massachusetts Bay Colony. The Bicentennial also witnessed much toasting of Boston's nineteenth-century businessmen, politicians, reformers, and literary lights, but few toasts were raised to the working people who created the businessmen's wealth, elected the politicians to office, and served as the subjects of studies by reformers and novelists.

In these pages we tell part of the largely untold history of Boston's workers and attempt to give credit where credit is due. These are just a few of the forgotten Bostonians who will appear in our essays: Yankee artisans who carried Revolutionary ideals into the Industrial Revolution; Irish and Italian laborers who literally built the city of Boston in its modern form; Yankee "farm girls" who staffed the city's offices, department stores, and schoolrooms; Irish and Afro-American women who did domestic chores for the wealthier citizens; Jewish and Italian "working girls" who kept sewing machines humming in Boston's garment shops.

These working people not only contributed to Boston's economic development; they made important social, cultural, and political contributions as well. By examining these contributions we will see the limits of the traditional historic and sociological view of the worker as "economic man," concerned only with bread-and-butter issues and higher wages. The long struggle for the shorter working day, in which Boston's workers played a preeminent role, attests to the significance of cultural issues and humane concerns.

Chapter 1 assesses the enormous political contribution Boston's artisans, sailors, and laborers made to the development of revolutionary consciousness in the 1700s. Chapter 2 examines the neglected political significance of the struggle for the shorter working day, an issue that contributed strongly to the radicalism of the Boston labor movement between 1830 and 1890. These essays are also concerned with the social and cultural history of the Boston working class. Chapter 3 describes the coming of the Irish immigrants and their emergence as working-class people. Chapter 4 concerns some of the city's other immigrant groups; it notes the unique history of the Afro-Americans, and focuses on the effects of ghetto residency upon the working class as a whole. Chapter 5 returns to political history and the rise of immigrant ward bosses and trade-union business agents whose conservatism differed from the politics of nineteenth-century Boston labor radicals. Chapter 6 narrates the events of the troubled 1920s, which began with the Boston police strike, culminated in the execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, and ended with the onset of the Great Depression. Finally, Chapter 7 describes the effects of the economic crisis in the 1930s on the city's workers; it also analyzes the limits of New Deal reforms, and the problems the Depression caused for Mayor James Michael Curley's patronage machine. The Epilogue merely sketches a few of the major changes that have affected the Hub's working people since World War II. The contemporary history of the Boston labor movement is difficult to write because the city's workers are still making it.

These chapters do not form a comprehensive chronological history of Boston's workers; much research remains to be done before that history can be written. In fact, this book should be read as a series of chapters in the history of the city's working class. Some are chronological and some are topical, but all of them share a common approach: to organize, summarize, and most importantly popularize widely divergent writings about Boston's workers.

Some of these writings are readily accessible. Others appear in the form of detailed scholarly monographs; others in dated works, long out of print. Since this is a popular text without footnotes, we cannot adequately cite all the sources that we have used in compiling these essays. It is our hope that the bibliography will fully acknowledge our debt to earlier writers. We also hope that the bibliography will encourage the reader to explore some of the other literature that is available on the subject.

Our approach differs from the one adopted by many historians, that is, the view that workers have been helpless victims in history, caught in a subculture of poverty, handicapped by the lack of formal education, dominated by the business class, and manipulated by religious leaders and demagogic politicians. Boston's workers have, to be sure, been victimized and exploited. The social and psychological effects can be seen quite clearly today in the area's workers, according to Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb, authors of *The Hidden Injuries of Class.* It is misleading, however, to adopt a passive view of labor history as composed largely of what happened to workers.

We do not intend to romanticize workers' history. Our descriptions of oppressive working and living conditions should make this clear. Nor do we intend to exaggerate workers' influence in Boston's past. In fact, the main theme of these essays is the failure of the city's working-class majority to take control of its own fate through various means, including legislative reform, trade unionism, and attempts to control the Democratic party. It is important, though, to correct the imbalance in the city's history and to see that the great majority of working people has exerted a significant force. It is also important to correct the bias in traditional histories, which ignore the independent initiatives of working people and view "progress" largely in terms of what businessmen, clergymen, politicians, and reformers did for working people. Boston's workers have made their own history, but they have not done so under circumstances of their own choosing; they have done so under circumstances imposed by the capitalist economy in which they worked and the competitive society in which they lived.

The reader may be surprised at times by the radicalism of certain Boston workers. It would be well to keep in mind that the fundamental criticisms of capitalist society that run through this history from Seth Luther's "Address to the Workingmen of New England" in 1832 to Bartolomeo Vanzetti's prison writings of the 1920s were motivated not only by a profound desire to change an unjust, unequal society; this radicalism also came from a sense of frustration that working people felt when they were denied political democracy, social equality, economic opportunity, and human dignity that society's rulers had promised. That radicalism seems absent among Boston's workers today, but a sense of frustration has returned as working people have learned that the "affluent society" has not become the "great society" proclaimed in the early 1960s.

These essays were originally presented in the form of lectures in April and May of 1977 at the Boston Public Library as part of the Learning Library Program, supported by the National Endowment for the Humanities. Paul Wright, the director of the Learning Library, contributed enormously to the lecture series. He has also been a valuable supporter and editor in the process of turning the lectures into a book. We would also like to thank the BPL staff, especially Y. T. Feng, Liam Kelly, Philip McNiff, and Rick Zonghi.

Sari Roboff presented in a guest lecture much of the information that appears here on women workers. Ms. Roboff also permitted the generous use of her valuable oral-history interviews with Boston's workers. These interviews form the basis of a unique personal history of the city's labor

movement. Given the lack of historical information about Boston's workers, our study would be deficient without Ms. Roboff's excellent oral history.

In his guest lecture Steve Miller contributed much of the information about the recent period that appears in the Epilogue. His unpublished paper on Boston's Irish patronage machine also contained important facts and insights that influenced the writing of Chapter 5. Linda Kealey and Alfred Young read and criticized Chapter 1. I am grateful for their comments, but of course they are not responsible for any errors of fact or interpretation. I am also grateful to three of my former students at Brandeis University who shared with me the results of their research on neglected aspects of Boston labor history: Harriet Guthertz on the Women's Trade Union League, Jama Lazerow on the Knights of Labor, and Mitchell Snay on the women social workers and labor activists of Denison House. I would also like to thank Jan Corash for her excellent help with photography and photo research.

Hugh Carter Donahue helped in researching and writing the lectures that formed the basis of this book. He has served as a constructive critic. His contribution to the research and writing of this book has been even greater. In fact, without his contribution, this book could never have been completed in its present form.

Hugh Carter Donahue and I would both like to thank the National Endowment for the Humanities and the staff at the Boston Public Library for making this project possible.

James R. Green
University of Massachusetts
September 4, 1977

I

Artisans, Laborers, and Servants in Colonial and Revolutionary Boston

In 1630, the very year of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's founding, the labor problem gained the attention of the General Court. The legislature enacted a law limiting the wages of carpenters, joiners, bricklayers, sawyers, and thatchers to two shillings per day. When the carpenters took advantage of the colony's chronic labor scarcity to gain three shillings a day, Puritan Governor John Winthrop complained that the builders could now make enough money in four days to keep themselves for a week: they would spend the remainder of their week in "vain and idle waste of precious time," spending their earnings on tobacco and "strong waters."

Although labor relations began on a contentious note (a note that would be sounded many more times in Boston's history), the Puritan colony enjoyed relative peace with its laboring classes, at least compared to the situation in "vexed and troubled" England. In a predominantly agrarian colony with communal aspirations the General Court assumed responsibility for setting the rate of wages and the price of commodities when it was necessary to do so for the commonweal. In the colony's first century, when survival dictated a basic kind of cooperation, labor scarcity prevented most employers from slashing wages, as was often the case in overpopulated England. The General Court also kept close watch on food prices to prevent the kind of bread riots that had erupted in European cities. Furthermore, the colonists preserved some of the medieval customs and laws designed to protect laborers and servants. In 1642, for example, a Massachusetts court awarded Thomas Marvin back pay plus twenty shillings "for being turned away, unprovided."

Labor scarcity in colonial times had many important effects. It meant that large numbers of indentured servants were imported from England, and when their numbers declined it meant that African slaves were imported from the South, thereby enriching a number of Boston's merchant families. The lack of laborers, especially in the skilled trades, also meant that women enjoyed more opportunities in the colonies.

In the English textile industry women and children generally performed the spinning, cleaning, and carding tasks, but in the colonies females also engaged in weaving, a task reserved for males in the old country. Young women not only received instruction in sewing, knitting, quilting, and other manners of housewifery, but some were also apprenticed in such trades as dressmaking, laundering, millinery, dyeing, glazing, pastry cooking, and candy making. Colonial women even took established male occupations as meat cutters, blacksmiths, shipbuilders, upholsterers, tanners, and gunsmiths. In most of these cases widows took over their husbands' trade. Most female proprietors were in fact keepers of inns, taverns, and retail shops, and not artisans. Nursing and midwifery were by far the most common wage-earning positions for women, but these would be restricted with the rise of a male-dominated medical profession.

Labor scarcity also meant that laborers in this predominantly agrarian colony would be impressed into field work during some harvest seasons. There was little of the violent opposition to this form of communal forced labor that appeared when the Royal Navy impressed colonists in the 1700s. Because they lacked the well-developed craft consciousness of European artisans and because they faced little competition from outsiders or inter-

Candlemaking

lopers, few of the colony's skilled workers formed guilds. An exceptional case was the shoemakers, who in 1646 petitioned the General Court for the "liberty" to "Joyne into a Company as wee were In our Native Country and give us power" to "regulatt things In our Calling." In October of 1648 a guild of shoemakers was incorporated, along with one for coopers, with both companies setting out lists of rates (also called "just prices") and of work rules (which controlled access to the trade as well as working conditions within the trade).

The colonial period is filled with concerted actions by laboring people, ranging from slave rebellions in the South to strikes in bigger cities with larger artisan communities, such as New York. In 1675 ship carpenters rode John Langworthy "upon a pole and by violence" from Boston's North End to the town dock causing "a great tumult of people." The carpenters justified their conduct on the ground that "hee [Langworthy] was an interloper and had never served his time to the trade of a Ship carpenter" as an apprentice. However, concerted actions of this kind were rare in seventeenth-century Boston, and strikes were unrecorded.

In the early 1700s, however, the conditions that created labor peace and relative harmony among the classes were changing. The colony's population was growing (from a little over three thousand in 1650 to about ten thousand in 1710); this growth reduced labor scarcity and caused increased competition for jobs and bread, especially during the depressed times that continued to afflict Boston's economic life. Furthermore, by the end of the 1600s much of the town's original communal spirit had vanished, along with many of the medieval customs and Puritan laws enacted to protect laboring people. Boston was never an egalitarian community—it was dominated from the start by the landed Puritan oligarchy—but by 1700 the gap between rich and poor was growing. A new class of "merchant princes" appeared whose commercial practices and ostentatious ways conflicted with Puritanism. The merchants who lived in elegant houses along the beach of Great Cove did not yet control the town's politics, but they had taken charge of the economy. The merchants' high-handed behavior had angered the Puritan oligarchy for decades, and in the early 1700s their tactics began to provoke the laboring classes as well.

Between 1709 and 1713 Bostonians took direct action against an arrogant merchant named Andrew Belcher who continued to export grain from the town during a bread shortage. Belcher was gaining from the British mercantile system, through which the mother country extracted raw materials from the colonies, and he was benefiting from the lack of an internal colonial law regulating the practices of merchants. He grew rich on royal war contracts during Queen Anne's War and, as historian Gary Nash maintains, when Belcher "chose to export grain to the Caribbean, at a handsome profit, rather than sell it for a smaller profit to hungry townspeople, his ships were attacked and his warehouses emptied by an angry crowd." During this colonial crowd action rank lost its privilege: the lieutenant governor was shot for attempting to intervene. "Bostonians of meagre means learned that through concerted action, the

powerless could become powerful, if only for the moment," Professor Nash concludes. "Wealthy merchants who would not listen to the pleas of the community could be forced through collective action to subordinate profits to the public need." As E. P. Thompson, the British social historian, has shown in an essay on the moral economy of the crowd, people took direct action when merchants and tradesmen violated customary laws or just prices set to protect the poor.

After Queen Anne's War ended in 1713, Boston's economy slumped and wages dropped. Attempts were made to organize a land bank, which would have increased the circulating currency, but these efforts were checked by Governor Dudley and a group of wealthy merchants that included some war profiteers. The governor and the tight-money merchants actually blamed the economic troubles on the spending of "the Ordinary sort" of people who wasted their earnings on a "foolish fondness of Foreign Commodities & Fashions" and on drinking in Boston's many taverns. This was hypocrisy. The merchants themselves were in the business of providing foreign commodities, including Jamaican rum, and were known for their ostentatious dress and behavior. Their arrogance angered unemployed people caught in the inflationary crisis. The town's working people protested against men who got rich "by grinding the poor" and who, according to one writer, actually studied "how to oppress, cheat and overreach their neighbors."

Queen Anne's War and the subsequent recession with its higher prices, lower wages, and unemployment began a period of hard times for old Boston. By the 1740s the town had been afflicted with so many disasters and disorders that many Protestant preachers were convinced that Bostonians were being singled out for punishment by a vengeful Almighty, angry with a people who had so obviously failed to fulfill the Puritans' holy mission. During this period of religious revival, called the Great Awakening, religious and commercial leaders became the subject of sharp criticism. "In Boston the itinerant preacher James Davenport hotly indicted the rich and powerful and advised ordinary people to break through the crust of tradition in order to right the wrongs of a decaying society," writes Gary Nash in an important essay on pre-Revolutionary urban radicalism. "It was the spectre of unlearned artisans and laborers assuming authority in this manner that frightened many upper-class city dwellers and led them to charge the revivalists with preaching levelism and anarchy."

"It is . . . an exceedingly difficult, gloomy time with us," complained one conservative divine from Boston in the 1740s. "Such an enthusiastic, factious, censorious spirit was never known here. . . . Every lowbred, illiterate Person can resolve Cases of Conscience and settle the most difficult points of Divinity better than the most learned Divines." The spirit of religious individualism set loose by Boston's religious rebel Anne Hutchinson had become a popular enthusiasm. This new challenge to the Puritan oligarchy did seem to have leveling tendencies which could lead to demands for democracy.

This challenge to the authority of the clergy in the early 1700s coincided with various attacks on royal authority and mercantile monopoly. The growing disorder in Boston's civic life was not just the result of a decline in the power of Puritanism or an increase in natural disasters. Troubles also arose from the town's unregulated marketplace. Food riots resulted from the extortions of merchants such as Belcher, who charged all the market would bear. On the other hand, discontent grew among those producers whose activity was still regulated by the authorities. For example, the colony's bakers, whose prices were regulated by the so-called bread assizes, tried to evade the statute and sometimes came into conflict with the market clerks appointed to enforce the law. In 1743 the bakers of Boston finally took concerted action, engaging in the colony's first recorded strike. They refused to bake bread until their allowance was increased. The bakers complained that other producers and merchants could charge what the market would bear while they were still limited to the old standard of the just price.

Most city markets in the Western world were closely regulated; indeed, "retail restrictions symbolized a medieval sense of order and regularity," writes G. B. Warden in *Boston: 1689-1776.* "Few people outside of New England questioned

the validity and necessity of strictly regulated markets [and] guilds." Bostonians departed radically from tradition in deciding that trade without regulation could be more profitable; they made "every business day a market day and allowed selling to take place all over town, not just within a restricted marketplace." These people were the first to develop the commercial values and practices that came to dominate the country's capitalist economy.

However, as Warden remarks, an unregulated commercial market seemed risky to many people, whether they were poor laborers worried about the unpredictable price of bread or colonial leaders concerned with preserving order. Financial crises in the 1720s produced a movement to reform Boston's free market, but by 1736 the townspeople had not only boycotted the new marketplace with its stricter regulations, they had renounced the market reforms in a town meeting. Warden describes the frightening events that followed:

> The winter of 1737 aggravated the town's distress with chilling winds and snows which froze the harbor solid all the way to Nantasket, preventing many necessary goods like food and firewood from reaching the town by sea or by road. Throughout these dismal years a devastating throat distemper swept through New England, causing thousands of illnesses and deaths. It was too much for Bostonians to bear silently and rationally. In March 1737 a furious mob attacked the three empty market houses [inactive because of the boycott] in Boston, sawed through the foundations of one, and leveled another in minutes.

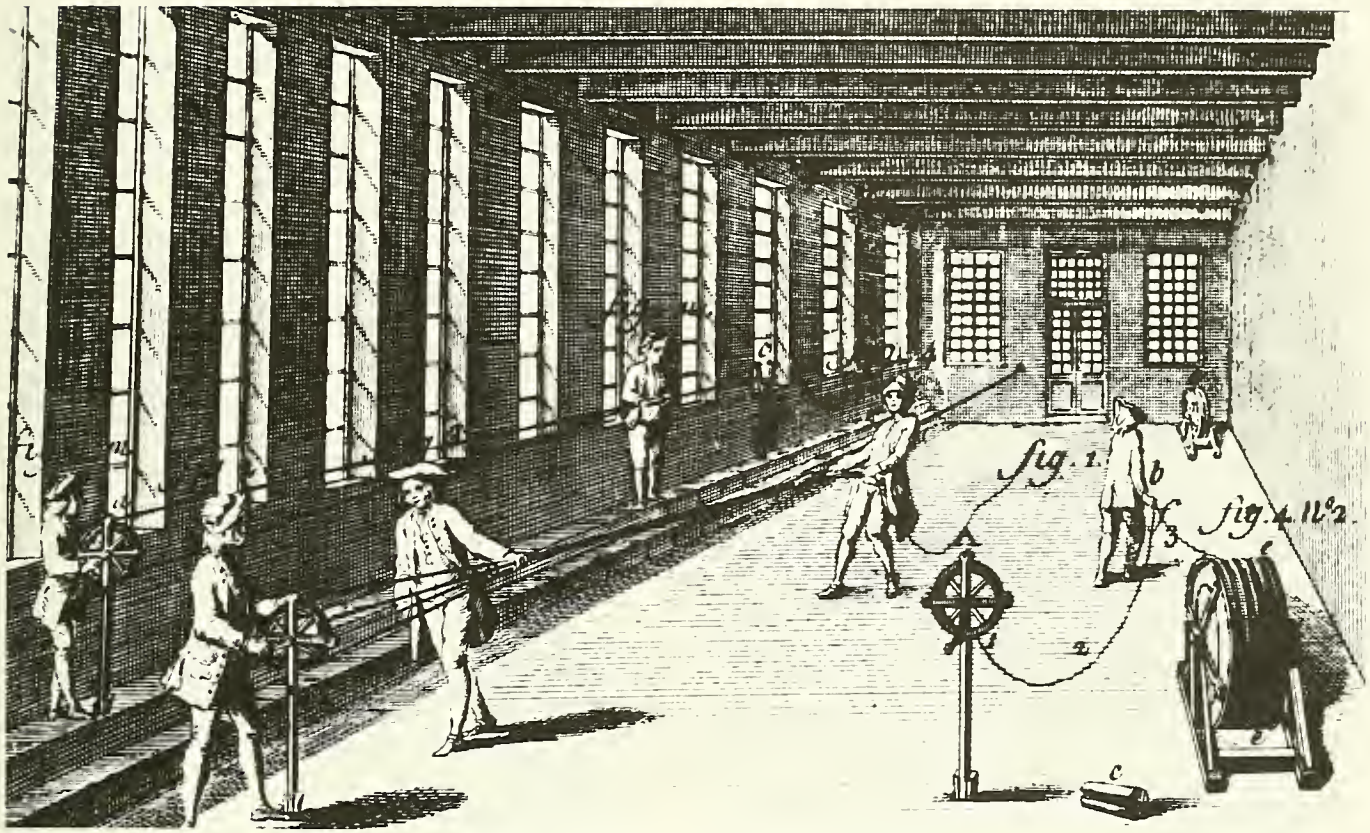
Warden, who sees "no apparent sense to the attack," suggests that "the market houses perhaps reminded the people too well that the town's trade was chaotic and that high-handed reforms were in vain."*

The troubles caused by Boston's unregulated commercial market also appeared, in a different form, in the unregulated labor market. The labor scarcity of the late 1600s that had worked to the toilers' advantage did not carry over into the 1700s, when economic depression and population growth produced serious unemployment. (Boston's population reached sixteen thousand in 1730, its high point for the colonial period.)

The town's decline began with a terrible smallpox epidemic in 1721, which recurred in 1730, killing almost two thousand citizens—"a blow from which the town never really recovered," according to G. B. Warden. "Ship captains and farmers avoided the town as much as possible during the epidemics and found that they could get better prices and services in other Massachusetts towns." In 1734 Parliament passed a law limiting the colonial distillers' supply of cheap French molasses. The Molasses Act, one of a long string of mercantilist laws that hurt colonial Boston, damaged the distillery business as well as the shipping industry, which built many of its vessels to serve the molasses trade. "Shipwrights, coopers, caulkers, sailors, carpenters and ropemakers suffered along with the distillers and did not even have the consolation of cheap rum to drown their sorrows," Warden comments. "By 1740, orders for new ships from the Boston yards had dropped from forty to twenty a year; shipbuilding, fishing, distilling and related trades declined by 66 per cent in total business." Boston had lost its status as the leading port in the colonies.

In Boston the decline in population did not create a labor scarcity that could really benefit most artisans; the advantage gained by labor scarcity was wiped out by economic adversity. Mary Roys Baker, a contemporary trade unionist turned historian, wrote that the port's "bankrupt economy could not support permanent trade unions, no matter how experienced 'Workemen' were in creating informal labor organizations; and no matter how rich was the labor heritage which Bay Colony workers inherited from their British ancestors."

*The issue of the public market continued to cause trouble in Boston after 1737. When Peter Faneuil, a wealthy Anglican, offered to build the town a market building of English design, he insisted on brick construction to discourage attacks by crowds. The townspeople, for their part, agreed to Faneuil's generous offer but insisted that the new market would not be subject to strict regulation and that it should be open to all who wanted to use it. It was, in short, to be a physical expression of the free market that became so important to American commercial capitalism.



Ropemaking

With a few exceptions, all labor movements in colonial Boston were "informal, temporary, occasional and sporadic."

Throughout the mid 1700s Boston's working people were largely on the defensive, not only against their colonial masters and employers but against the agents of British imperialism. Concerted actions gave way to individual acts of rebellion and disobedience. The apprentice system, already threatened by the unregulated nature of Boston's labor market, suffered even more as young apprentices such as Benjamin Franklin rebelled against oppressive working conditions.

Josiah Franklin, a tallow maker in Fort Street, wanted to send his talented son Benjamin to Latin school and then to Harvard to train for the ministry, but his artisan's earnings were insufficient. So at the age of ten Ben was apprenticed to an artisan to learn a trade. As Franklin's recent biographer, Arthur Tourtellot, observes:

> Boston itself was largely a community of artisans. The learned pursuits were limited to the ministry, teaching, a few magistracies, and, to an equally minor extent, the practice of medicine. Mercantilism provided rich livings for a few at the top of the economic scale, but aside from the laborers on the wharves most of the many dependent for a livelihood on importing and exporting were mariners who were away at sea most of their working lives. (Benjamin's brother, Josiah, Jr., twenty-nine, was for nine years gone on his first voyage.)

After two years at soapmaking Franklin made it clear to his father that he "dislik'd the Trade"

which involved hot, noxious work melting down animal fats. Attempting to persuade young Ben not to follow his older brother to sea, the elder Franklin took his unhappy apprentice (a common enough figure in colonial Boston) to observe the other trades and "to see good Workmen handle their Tools."

After a very brief apprenticeship in his cousin's cutlery shop, Benjamin was apprenticed to his twenty-one-year-old brother James, who returned from England in 1717 to set up a press in Queen Street. At the age of twelve, Ben displayed the traits of independence that made many young artisans so troublesome: he refused to sign the rigid articles of indenture which would have bound him to his brother for nine years, but he eventually relented and signed the papers, beginning another unhappy apprenticeship. As Franklin explained this experience in his *Autobiography*:

> Though a brother, he considered himself as my master, and me as his apprentice, and, accordingly, expected the same services from me as he would from another, while I thought he demean'd me too much in some he requir'd of me, who from a brother expected more indulgence. Our disputes were often brought before our father, and I fancy I was either generally in the right, or else a better pleader, because the judgment was generally in my favor. But my brother was passionate, and had often beaten me, which I took extreamly amiss; and, thinking my apprenticeship very tedious, I was continually wishing for some opportunity of shortening it, which at length offered in a manner unexpected. [At this point, Franklin adds an interesting footnote to his *Autobiography*: "I fancy his harsh and tyrannical treatment of me might be a means of impressing me with that aversion to arbitrary power that has stuck to me through my whole life."]
>
> At length, a fresh difference arising between my brother and me, I took upon me to assert my freedom, presuming that he would not venture to produce the new indentures. It was not fair in me to take this advantage, and this I therefore reckon one of the first errata of my life; but the unfairness of it weighed little with me, when under the impressions of resentment for the blows his passion too often urged him to bestow upon me, though he was otherwise not an ill-natur'd Man: perhaps I was too saucy and provoking.
>
> When he found I would leave him, he took care to prevent my getting employment in any other printing-house of the town, by going round and speaking to every master, who accordingly refus'd to give me work.

Young Franklin learned that the remnants of medieval law and custom offered little protection to apprentices in Boston's free market economy. The lesson was also learned by indentured servants, who stopped coming from England to Boston in the mid 1700s. "For most of the 18th century," James Henretta notes, "Negro slaves compensated for the lack of white servants. From 150 in 1690, the number of Negroes rose to 1,100 . . . in 1730" when "they made up 8.4 percent of the population." Although there were laws to protect "freeborn Englishmen" who came as indentured servants, Africans could be treated with the same brutality in Massachusetts that they suffered in the South.

As Robert C. Twombly notes in his essay "Black Resistance to Slavery in Massachusetts," slaves resisted and rebelled even though they often paid the ultimate penalty. In a noted case from 1681, for example, a woman named Black Maria was burned at the stake because she and other servants inadvertently killed a child when they torched two buildings in Roxbury. "The severity of the sentence can be attributed to the death," Twombly explains, "and to public hysteria over a rash of conflagrations set by servants of several races in and around Boston." One other black slave was executed after an outbreak of arson in 1723 that led the lieutenant governor to issue a proclamation placing severe penalties upon the "villanous and desperate *Negroes,* or other disolute People" who had "entered into wicked and horrid Combination to burn and destroy the said Town."

Increasingly racist laws in the commonwealth had several purposes. One was to segregate the black slaves from the white servants who often labored side by side with them; it was feared that

the spirit of rebellion would spread from the former to the latter. In 1751, the Boston town meeting complained of "Negro and Indian Servants . . . getting into Companies in the Night, for Drinking, Gaming, Stealing, etc. and enticing the white servants to join 'em (of which there has lately been several Instances)." The Negro and Indian servants not only undermined the Puritan work ethic instilled in white servants, but they exemplified violent rebellion and resistance, which disturbed the Puritan oligarchy profoundly.

At several points in the pre-Revolutionary years of the 1700s slaves rose up and killed their masters and other white people, according to Twombly's research. The most sensational case occurred in 1751, when the slaves of Captain John Codman of Charlestown—Mark, Phillis, and Phoebe—slowly poisoned their master with arsenic supplied to them by Doctor Clark's slave Robin. Phoebe turned state's evidence. Mark and Phillis, who were married, were executed together on Charlestown Common for treason as well as murder: Mark was hanged and Phillis was burned at the stake after having been strangled. The execution was reportedly "attended by the greatest number of Spectators ever known on such an Occasion." Executions were always well attended in this period, but this one was exceptional, for obvious reasons. In order to make a lasting impression on all rebellious servants—white, red, or black—Mark's body was left hanging in chains for twenty years!

Faced with examples of this kind, most discontented slaves chose flight rather than violent resistance. Like white indentured servants and young apprentices, they tried to escape to other colonies, to the relatively anonymous "alley life" of ports like Boston, or else to the sea, which is the course Crispus Attucks took after running away from his master in Framingham. Lawrence Towner's study of advertisements for runaway servants of all kinds in Massachusetts newspapers in the period before 1750 indicates that blacks accounted for 223 of the 676 known runaways, or about one third of the total—a noteworthy proportion, since Afro-Americans only accounted for 2.2 percent of the population.

While a clear color line was drawn by 1750 in the treatment of white and black servants, free-born Englishmen continued to suffer from treatment they likened to that of slaves.* As the radical historian Jesse Lemisch argues in his study of merchant seamen during the Revolution, sailors were supposed to be protected by admiralty law, but many colonial laborers found the customary rules and statutes could not protect them from tyrannical masters. Arbitrary impressment of poor people into the navy was of course a source of great anger and fear to the seamen; it helps to explain why they later became some of the most militant revolutionaries. But, as Lemisch explains, impressment disrupted all of colonial society, "giving other classes and groups cause to share a common grievance with the press-gang's more direct victims; just about everyone had a relative at sea."

In 1747 the anger and fear directed toward impressment erupted into one of Boston's most violent riots, when the commodore of a royal naval squadron ordered a press-gang into port to capture merchant seamen for his majesty's service. The gang had collected about fifty sailors when a crowd armed with clubs and cutlasses attacked, freeing the sailors and sending the press-gang back to the safety of its ships. To make sure no further impressment took place, the crowd boldly seized naval officers on shore and demanded that Governor Shirley prosecute the press-gang; if he did not, they threatened to hang the officers. Governor Shirley managed to rescue the navy men, but when he ordered the sheriff to break up the crowd the sheriff was "swabb'd in the gutter." The next day the General Court condemned the crowd and promised to protect the governor, who shipped off to Castle William in the harbor "to await the town's apology." The town meeting also took a dim view of the rioting, but it insisted that the commodore and his press-gang were at fault. The citizens of Boston had too often been "exposed to the ill usage of arbitrary power."

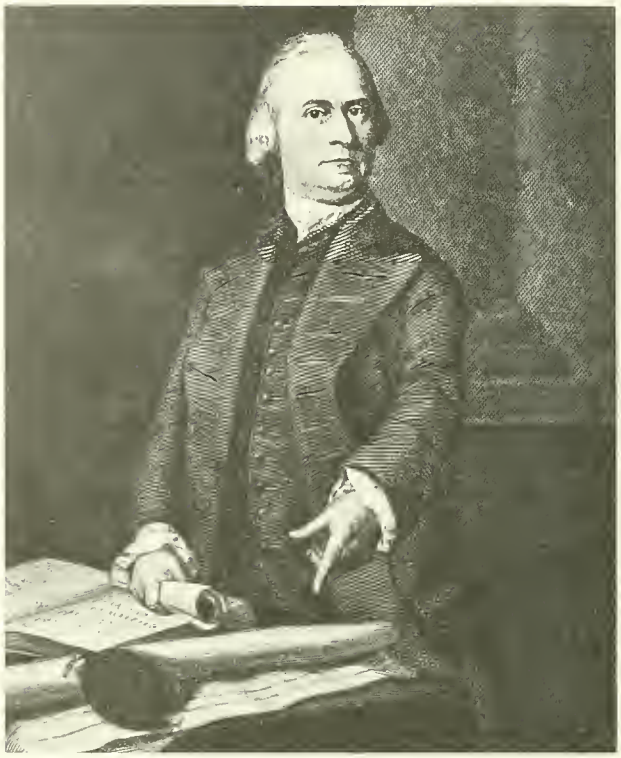
*It was said in the 1700s that a young man should avoid the Royal Navy because its officers would "cut him and staple him and use him like a Negro, or rather, like a dog." This is one of the reasons Ben Franklin's father suppressed the young man's urge to follow his older brother to sea.

Governor Shirley made an interesting comment on the 1747 impressment rioters. He did not blame the people in the crowd. "What I think may be esteemed as the principal cause of the mobbish turn in this Town is its Constitution; by which the Management of it is devolv'd upon the populace assembled in Town Meeting." For Governor Shirley, too much democracy led to anarchy. For the town meeting, too much arbitrary power led to justified rebellion. According to Shirley, in the town meeting "the meanest inhabitants . . . by their constant Attendance there generally are the majority and outvote the Gentlemen, Merchants, Substantial Traders and all the better part of the Inhabitants; to whom it is irksome to attend." With so many sailors, laborers, and "low sort of people" involved, "a factious and Mobbish Spirit is Cherish'd." With a different government, less subject to the influence of the hue and cry in the streets, Boston would be a more manageable seaport with a population more willing to do his majesty's service.

Young Thomas Hutchinson joined Andrew Oliver (his future brother-in-law) and two other merchants in drafting a government report on the 1747 impressment riot, blaming the "Tumultuous Assembly" on "Foreign Seamen, Servants, Negroes, and Other Persons of Mean and Vile Condition." Hutchinson was embarking on a career that would make him a marked man among Boston's laboring classes. In 1748 he was also the leading figure in designing a new tight-money policy that helped the merchants. This currency devaluation meant great hardship to working people, especially those already unemployed. Because he personified the military contractors and others who profited from King George's War (1739-1747), Hutchinson, then speaker of the house, was attacked as an enemy of the people. Given the oppressive laws drafted by the General Court in this period it is surprising that Boston crowds were not constantly rioting. After the deflationary laws were passed, unruly mobs took to the streets, insulting legislators, notably Hutchinson. When the speaker's house caught on fire in 1749 the town's fire fighters stood aside, watching and shouting, "Let it burn! Let it burn!"

Pamphleteering became a new way in which the laboring classes could express their anger at oppressive conditions. For example, one anonymous pamphleteer wrote, "Poverty and Discontent appear in every Face, (except the Countenances of the Rich), and dwell upon every Tongue." Some men were controlled by "Lust of Power, Lust of Fame, Lust of Money," and they had profited during King George's War and the deflationary period that followed. "No Wonder such Men can build Ships, Houses, buy Farms, set up their Coaches, Chariots, live very splendidly, purchase Fame, Posts of Honour," the pamphleteer declared. These "Birds of prey . . . are Enemies to all Communities—wherever they live."

This pamphleteer, Professor Nash suggests, expressed the growing discontent of the laboring classes and reflected increasing class conflict between the rich and the poor. In the mid 1700s the anger of the poor was not directed entirely against British mercantilism and the tyranny of the



Samuel Adams, by John Singleton Copley
Source: Museum of Fine Arts

crown; it was directed primarily to those agents of the crown in the Bay Colony and those merchants who benefited from the mercantilist system in Boston while the city's working people suffered. The denunciation of the rich and powerful as parasitic men, who preyed upon the community, looked forward to the labor theory of value and the producer consciousness, which the leaders of the early labor movement articulated after the Revolution.

The year 1760 seemed to promise new prosperity and harmony for Boston, but disaster struck the town just when its people were beginning to regain their confidence. A terrible fire began in the tanning district of the town on March 20, eventually destroying over three hundred shops and houses. Samuel Adams, the town's new tax collector, made himself popular by not collecting taxes from victims of the fire.

Like his father, Sam Adams was a member of the Caucus, a group formed in 1719 by the merchant Elisha Cooke and other opponents of royal authority and tight money policy. In the eventful 1760s, when a series of repressive royal acts stirred Bostonians to the brink of rebellion, Adams, a Harvard-educated lawyer, met with the Caucus Club in the attic of Thomas Dawes where they drank, smoked, and chose the officers of the town. Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson considered Sam Adams and his "garretters" the rabble of Boston, but according to his biographer, John Miller, Adams "loved democratic company and felt thoroughly at home with the shipyard workers, masons, and politicians who crowded into Tom Dawes's attic." Later the Caucus Club moved to the more public quarters of the Green Dragon Tavern in Union Street. This public house became the headquarters of the Revolution and the meet-

Green Dragon Tavern in the North End, headquarters of the Revolution

ing place for the Sons of Liberty "from the nearby shipyards, ropewalks and docks."

Between 1760 and 1765 Bostonians grew increasingly rebellious in the face of new acts of oppression administered by royal agents in the Bay Colony. The new governor, Francis Bernard, came on at a time when the Superior Court granted customs officials writs of assistance to search without any warning in an effort to stop smuggling. When Bernard appointed Thomas Hutchinson chief justice in 1761, colonists feared a new conspiracy was afoot to concentrate power in the hands of a few men such as Hutchinson, who already held several positions, including that of lieutenant governor. Hutchinson's brother-in-law Andrew Oliver was already secretary of the province, and a number of Hutchinson's relations held other high positions. "Is not this amazing ascendancy of one family Foundation sufficent to erect a Tyranny?" asked John Adams, another lawyer active in the Caucus Club.

John Adams later reported that the writs of assistance granted to the customs officials provoked Bostonians to the point that they were ready to take up arms to defend their homes and property. The new king, George III, ordered stricter enforcement of the Navigation Acts—designed to make mercantilism profitable to England. Then, in 1764, Parliament passed the Sugar Act, which made it even more difficult for American merchants and distillers to make money in the molasses trade. These new duties were designed not just to regulate trade, but also to raise taxes. Their passage helped create an alliance between merchants and lawyers in Boston who began to express stronger resentment about taxation without representation.

In the spring of 1765 the Stamp Act passed through the Houses of Parliament as a proposed means of raising additional revenue from the colonies. In the summer, Boston received news that Andrew Oliver would be appointed stamp distributor. The stage was set for an important series of events in which the Boston crowd took direct action against royal tryanny and disciplined itself for further political action.

In 1764, crowd violence surrounding an annual holiday called Pope's Day (also known as Guy Fawkes Day in Britain) had caused the death of a young boy. The holiday event was a popular anti-Catholic demonstration in which people celebrated the foiling of the gunpowder plot in which Guy Fawkes was sent by Catholics to blow up the Houses of Parliament. They also used the occasion to enact a kind of ritual of hatred for the pope, who was a particularly unpopular figure in Puritan New England. Pope's Day had become increasingly violent in the 1700s as crowds from the North and South ends battled each other in the streets. In 1764 the leaders of the North End and South End crowds, Samuel Swift (a ship carpenter) and Ebenezer MacIntosh (a leather dresser), were tried for the death of the young man in the November 5 riot; they were acquitted.

Engraving of Pope's Day Parade, 1769
Source: New York Historical Society

The violence of Pope's Day had continued despite the enactment of an anti-riot law in 1750; the day was popular not only because of the importance of antipopery in New England but because it gave to the poor a special holiday when they were allowed to demand levies from the well-to-do. According to Alfred F. Young, who is writing a book on the Boston crowd in this period, the celebration of Pope's Day with its ritualistic violence was transformed in 1765 into an overtly political event in which the traditional Puritan hostility toward hierarchical Catholicism was fused with the growing antipathy to royal tyranny.

This description of Pope's Day, taken from a Boston newspaper of 1821, chronicles the history

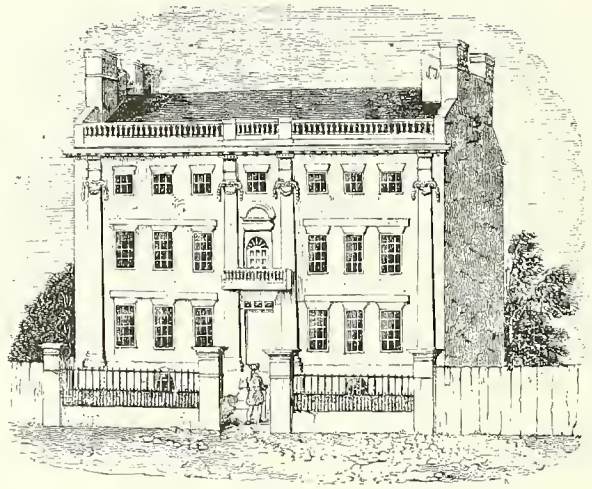
of the November 5 ritual and conveys the popular excitement connected with it:

> It is known to those who are conversant with English history, that in the year 1605, when James the First was on the throne, the Catholics were charged with a plot to blow up the parliament house by an explosion of gunpowder, while the king should be with both houses assembled therein, and re-establish their religion in that country. This was to have been executed on the fifth of November. It was said to have been discovered by means of one of the House of Lords receiving a billet requesting him not to go to the parliament on that day; and accompanied by such hints as induced an examination of the vaults under the parliament house. These had been leased to some Catholics for the purpose of storing coals. Upon searching them, thirty six barrels of powder were found. The Catholics have uniformly denied the existence of such a plot; and asserted that it was only one fiction among others to render them obnoxious, and to excuse the persecution to which they were subjected. Let it be true or false, it is certain, that one *Guy Fawkes*, a poor fanatic, suffered death, as the chosen instrument for the perpetration of this crime. It has been observed as a religious festival in England, and a form of prayer was established to be used upon it, in the Liturgy of their church; and it has been denominated the *gun powder treason*. In this country it was called Pope day.
>
> Our ancestors brought this, with their other prejudices, into this land. For many years the exhibitions were made in the evening. A very large stage was drawn, sometimes by horses, sometimes by men, from the north end, through the town, to the furthest part of the south end—it returned to the north, and after passing Middle street, was carried to Copps Hill and burnt. Persons carrying small bells, as a commission, visited all the houses to collect contributions, with the proceeds of which, a grand entertainment was made for those who belonged to the *Pope*. Upon the front of the stage was displayed a lanthorn of transparent paper, capable of holding a number of men, on which were scrawled uncouth figures, and rhymes in derision of the Pope and his gun powder plot. In the middle was an effigy of the Pope in an arm chair, dressed in gorgeous attire with a large white bush wig on, over which was an enormous gold laced hat. The wigs procured for this purpose had often adorned the pulpits of churches. Before his holiness, was a table on which was a large book, and playing cards scattered over it. In the extreme rear was a gigantic figure to represent the Devil of hideous form, with a pitch fork in his hand, and covered with tar and feathers. On the stage was music and something to drink—also, boys clad in frocks and trowsers, well covered with tar and feathers, who danced about the Pope, played with the cards and frequently climbed up and kissed the Devil. These were called the Devil's imps. For many years all this was carried on peaceably. But in process of time, another Pope was built at the south-end. This raised the resentment of the north-enders, as an encroachment upon their *patent right*; and so much confusion followed, that the government of the town put a stop to all exhibitions of the kind in the evening. After this the whole day was devoted to it. The Foregoing was the work of men.
>
> When the frolic was carried on by day-light, the elder apprentices of mechanics exhibited a pageantry of similar kind called a tender [presumably a Catholic pretender to the British throne, which had been long associated in the minds of all loyal subjects with the abomination of Popery] on a smaller scale. The younger apprentices still smaller; and so it descended in gradation to boys in petticoats, who swarmed in the streets and ran from house to house with little Popes in their hands, on pieces of board and shingles, the heads of which were carved out of small potatoes. The heads of the large figures were moveable, by means of poles which went through the bodies down into the box of the stage, and were turned round occasionally by boys within, in order to give every one a sight and to pay the obeisance of the Pope. At sundown the north-end-Pope and tender was carried to Copps Hill and burnt, and the south-end-

> Pope and tender to Fort Hill. At length a competition arose—formidable mobs collected, and furious battles were fought, with fists, clubs, stones and other missiles. Through the greatest part of the day, they avoided each other, and collected as much cash as they could. Towards night they sought a meeting and each endeavoured to gain the right hand side of the street. This was the signal for battle—much bruising, and in one instance death, was the consequence. The victorious party would seize the pageantry of their opponents, and bear it in triumph to Copp's Hill or Fort Hill, as the case might be, and burn the two together.

According to Alfred Young's analysis of the events in Boston during the 1765 Stamp Act crisis, the Loyal Nine, representing the middle-class interests who were hurt by the new taxes, decided to force the resignation of stamp distributor Andrew Oliver; they hoped to use Pope's Day as part of their plan. Master craftsmen from the North and South ends would lead laborers in a "symbolic action" to unify the rival crowds in a demonstration against the Stamp Act.

On August 14 the Loyal Nine's plans began according to schedule as effigies, notably of Andrew Oliver, were hung in the Common. Behind the effigy appeared "a Lock Boot with a head and horns peeping out of the top . . . said to be the Devil and his imps." Similar effigies of the Pope were used in the annual November 5 celebrations, reflecting the Puritan belief that the Pope was really inspired by the devil. On two occasions that day Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson sent the sheriff to remove the effigy of his brother-in-law from the Common, but in both cases the crowd intervened. A holiday atmosphere prevailed. The multitude was reported "so much affected by the spirit of Liberty that scarce any could attend to the task of day-labor." In the evening a crowd paraded through the North End and pulled down a half-finished structure that was intended to house Oliver's stamp office. After beheading and burning the effigy of Oliver in front of his own home, the "gentlemen" who helped organize the demonstration departed. But the crowd carried on, destroying some of Oliver's property and declaring a union between the North End and South End people.



Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson's colonial mansion in the North End, sacked in 1765

On August 26 the unified crowd, which had been "amazingly inflamed" by their earlier demonstration against the Stamp Act, gathered in response to a big bonfire. After attacking the rather substantial houses of the vice admiralty court clerk and two customs officials, they sacked Lieutenant Governor Hutchinson's mansion in the North End. By morning the crowd had reduced Thomas Hutchinson's elegant house to a mere shell. The people had settled a long-standing grievance against a wealthy, arrogant man who had nothing but contempt for the town's mobbish citizens and their democratic traditions.

Apparently the crowd had even more extensive plans. "For it seems the mob had set down no less then fifteen Houses in or near the Town to be attacked the next Night [August 27], among which was the Customhouse and the houses of some of the most respectable persons in the Government," wrote Governor Bernard. "It was now to become a War of Plunder, of general levelling and taking away the Distinction of rich and poor." The Loyal Nine, who were masters, shopkeepers, and professionals of higher social status than the rioters, had lost control of the shock troops. Apparently,

they had not considered the traditional pattern of crowd action to redress economic grievances and to express class hostilities. As Professor Gary Nash writes, the attacks on the homes of Oliver and Hutchinson (who represented the wealthy Tory faction of merchants) were not simply inspired by the Loyal Nine's plan to repeal the Stamp Act. The Boston crowd was also paying off some old debts. This action "was the culminating event of an era of protest against wealth and oligarchic power that had been growing in all cities," Nash concludes. "In addition, it demonstrated the fragility of the union between protesting city dwellers of the laboring classes and their more bourgeois partners, for in the uninhibited August attacks on property, the Boston crowd went much farther than Caucus leaders such as James Otis and Samuel Adams had reckoned or wished to countenance."

After the sacking of Hutchinson's mansion, which even Sam Adams denounced as the work of "a lawless unknown rabble," the Loyal Nine and the leaders of the opposition Whig Party moved to reestablish control over the crowd, partly through bribing leaders such as Ebenezer McIntosh, whose release from jail they secured after the August 26 riot. The leaders then continued with plans for more symbolic demonstrations on November 1, the day the Stamp Act would take effect, and on November 5, Pope's Day. On the first date, bells tolled and effigies were hung to protest the Act, but there was no violence. And November 5, Pope's Day, passed peacefully because, as the *Whig Gazette* reported, "the Commander of the South End (Ebenezer McIntosh) enterred into a treaty with the Commander of the North." They and their assistants pledged "no mischiefs would arise by their means."

On the morning of November 5, the two companies prepared their separate stages as usual. In addition to the Pope's effigy, each group added several other effigies, which signified "tyranny, oppression and slavery." At noon, "the two stages met in King Street where the union was established in very ceremonious manner." Dressed in militia uniforms, Captain McIntosh of the South End and Captain Swift, a North End artisan, led their troops —several thousand strong. After the formal union in King Street the crowds, who usually battled each other on Pope's Day, gave three huzzahs and interchanged ground. Then, according to the *Gazette* report, "the South End marched to the North and the North to the South, parading through the street until they again met near the Court House. The whole then proceeded to the Tree of Liberty under the shadows of which they refreshed themselves for a while."

As Dirk Hoerder concludes in his essay on "Boston Leaders and Boston Crowds," the results of the 1765 actions were two-fold: "The people began to develop an awareness of their power as a political crowd against the officials," and "the upper groups of Boston developed a full fledged fear of spontaneous action." Indeed, once popular action had forced the repeal of the Stamp Act, the opposition Whig Party cut all connections with the rioters and "reportedly threatened Ebenezer McIntosh, the lowly shoemaker, to remain silent

Paul Revere, Boston's leading artisan, by John Singleton Copley
Source: Boston Museum of Fine Arts

about their role." The Whigs wanted to end popular violence, which might be turned against their interests as well as those of the royal officialdom.

The Loyal Nine and the Sons of Liberty who met in the Green Dragon Tavern actively worked to prevent crowd violence. According to Paul Revere's biographer, Esther Forbes, the famous North End silversmith was among the artisans who helped to discipline the crowd in this period.

The occupation of the city by two thousand British troops in October of 1768 altered the stakes of popular protest. The redcoats themselves became a new source of anger to the townspeople. One of the main grievances was that off-duty British soldiers formed a source of cheap labor at a time when Boston laborers faced widespread unemployment. In fact, the Boston Massacre of March 5, 1770, followed directly in the wake of a fight between laborers and redcoats over job competition in the ropewalks. A giant man named Crispus Attucks, who was of red, black, and white descent, was one of the unemployed laborers who fought with British soldiers on the waterfront. He was also prominent in the crowd that gathered around the customhouse sentry on King Street during the night of March 5, 1770. Attucks' willingness to face the redcoats' muskets cost him his life. This runaway slave became one of the martyrs eulogized by the radicals after the Boston Massacre.

Death of Crispus Attucks in the Boston Massacre of 1770
Source: William C. Nell, *The Colonial Patriots of the American Revolution* (Boston, 1855)

In a recent book on that event, Harvard Law Professor Hiller B. Zobel describes the crowd that confronted the British troops as a mob, consisting of "rowdies, rough, loud, frequently intoxicated." They were "willing bully boys," for whom "rioting . . . was almost a ritual." Rioting, it seems, was a contagion which the mob caught from radical leaders with "heated up" brains. Zobel's analysis of conspiratorial crowd manipulation does not account for the general anger of the populace against the British troops or the specific grievances of unemployed workers whose jobs were being taken by soldiers. Clearly the Boston Massacre was not simply the result of a crowd being manipulated by Samuel Adams and his high command, because a throng of ten thousand people marched in a funeral procession for its victims—a number of people not much smaller than the town's total population.

After the Boston Massacre the radical leaders moved even more cautiously. The Boston Tea Party in December 1773 was a carefully controlled crowd action. By this time, Professor Hoerder argues, the Boston crowd had been deflected "at least in part from its own tradition," which included independent action around local grievances; it was "won over to exclusively anti-British action, most of the instigation of which came from the top down."

In May of 1774 Boston received news of the Port Act, which closed the city to commerce, allowing only the entry of food and fuel until full payment was rendered to the East India Company and to customs officials for losses sustained by various forms of resistance to British mercantilism (including the Tea Party). The Boston Committee of Correspondence, headed by Joseph Warren (later killed on Bunker Hill), sought to make the city's cause a colonial cause. As Professor Richard D. Brown writes in his history of the Committee, entitled *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts*: "Support for Boston poured in from all over the province. More than eighty towns . . . sent moral and material encouragement in the form of grain, livestock, and cash. Many of the towns that 'had for a long time been inactive, in a more public way,' apologized, assuring Boston that among them-

selves they had 'all along seen a determin'd Spirit of opposition.' Boston, towns agreed, was 'suffering in the Common Cause of Liberty & America.'"

Taking political responsibility for the economic effects of the Port Act, the Boston Committee led efforts to help those unemployed as a result of the port's closure. After the Overseers of the Poor bowed out in face of the town's enormous problems, a committee on ways and means proceeded to interview all classes of people suffering from the blockade, who assembled at Faneuil Hall to receive assistance. Ten afternoons were devoted to this process because so great a number appeared. Unskilled workers were the most distressed, so the donations committee which included Warren and Sam Adams set them to work repairing the streets. Thus, wrote William Cooper, the town clerk, "a great number of our most indigent inhabitants [were] enabled to earn their bread." More complicated measures to meet the crisis included the opening of a brick factory—employing eighty workers—which would operate on a nonprofit basis; the building with donated materials of a house to be sold for the general benefit of the city; and the finishing of several ships whose construction had been halted by the Port Act. According to the Committee of Correspondence minutes, further measures were taken so that work would "be as universal as possible." The Committee bought "a stock of wool, flax and cotton, to be distributed to all the spinners," erected looms for weaving homespun thread into textiles, and sold shoemakers leather that they paid for in finished shoes. And so, in the midst of the Revolutionary crisis, Boston's citizens departed from the unregulated market and the free-enterprise economy and worked together for their common good.

The Port Act crisis and the revolutionary situation in Boston during the 1774-1775 period also created a need not only for economic cooperation; it led to concerted economic mobilization against the British. General Gage, who commanded the five regiments of redcoats in Boston and acted as governor, tried to make the blockade more effective. The Committee of Correspondence retaliated by organizing the other towns with them to refuse to supply the troops with "labour, lumber, joice, spars, pickets, straw, bricks," or anything else that might "annoy" the citizens. This strike against Gage's army delayed the building of British barracks for several weeks.

After the events at Lexington and Concord, Boston continued to be a center of action during the Revolutionary War. From the Battle of Bunker Hill, where American revolutionaries engaged superior British forces, until General George Washington's troops forced the British to evacuate the city, Boston remained the symbol of colonial resistance to royal tyranny. After patriot troops occupied Dorchester Heights, Washington made a deal with General Gage, allowing British ships to leave Boston unharmed if the redcoats left the city intact. On March 17, 1776, the royal fleet sailed away, never to return, and Bostonians reoccupied their liberated city.

On July 18, 1776, the Declaration of Independence, signed on the fourth, was read in Boston. A few days later, the Boston Committee of Correspondence, which, according to Professor Hoerder, had been rather autocratic in the period after its Tea Party victory, ordered citizens to appear on the Common for military draft. Just as in the 1765 rioting, "when gentlemen-volunteers had

Gunsmiths at work during the Revolutionary War

guarded the property of the wealthy, a similar unit now surrounded the draft-age population with lowered guns. Gentlemen subject to the draft bought substitutes when their numbers were drawn by lot. . . . Incensed by this show of class . . . differences, the people rioted against the gentlemen and the Whig committee, shouting, 'Tyranny is Tyranny let it come from whom it may.'" It was the last political riot to occur in Boston for many years.

Bostonians won diverse gains from the Revolution. Blacks petitioned for an end to slavery in 1777, asserting that "in common with all other men" they had "a natural & unalienable right" to freedom, but had to wait until the decision in the *Commonwealth* v. *Jennison* case of 1783 to witness the legal liberation of those in bondage. After playing a distinguished role in the Revolutionary War, Afro-Americans finally won their freedom, after a century and a half of resistance. Bay State blacks were primarily responsible for ending slavery, but they received assistance from people of conscience, notably the Quakers, and from Boston workers who, according to John Adams, refused to face further competition from slave labor. Unfortunately, free blacks did not prosper through free labor; they remained largely in menial tasks, shut out of the artisan trades and small businesses.

Women gained little from the Revolution. As Alfred Young concludes, "Neither the collective activities nor the individual acts they undertook—the mass spinning bees or boycotts before the war—lifted them out of what was commonly regarded as the women's sphere." Abigail Adams wrote to her husband John asking him to join with the other Founding Fathers and "remember the ladies," because of the "patriotism of the female sex." But they were not remembered when it came to writing the laws of the new republic. Indeed, women probably lost ground legally after the Revolution. In colonial times a certain legal leniency existed that allowed for an unusual number of divorces and increased legal options for widows and divorced women, according to Joan Hoff Wilson. After the war ended, the rise of a new law profession, which Jefferson saw as the beginning of a slide toward legal Toryism, brought legal conservatism in its wake, and this meant legal losses for women. Females who had worked as nurses and midwives, two of the most common occupations for colonial women, also found themselves forced out of work by the rise of a stronger male medical profession.

"Daughters of Liberty," 1777
Source: New York Historical Society

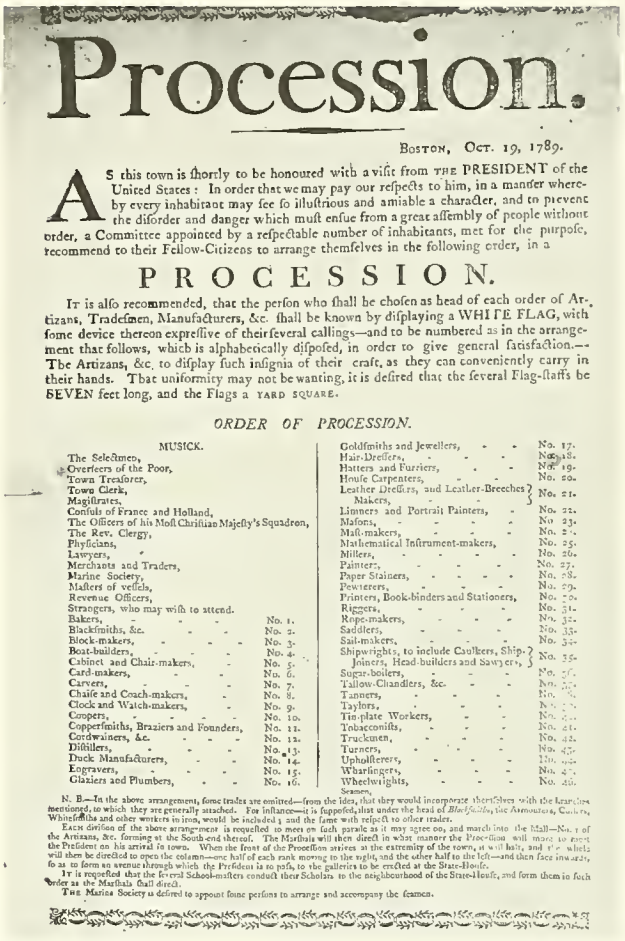
In economic terms, the seaport poor—male and female, black and white—gained nothing from the Revolution. The poor became more numerous than ever. Between 1770 and 1790 the top 10 percent of Boston's population, a group composed largely of wealthy merchants, increased its share of the wealth to 65 percent, while the bottom 30 percent of the people saw its share of the town's wealth reduced to a minuscule fraction of one percent. In his article "The Progress of Inequality in Boston," Allan Kulikoff found that 206 merchants claimed an average assessed wealth of £7,707 in 1790. By

contrast, 64 bakers—among the wealthiest of the tradesmen—averaged only £170 per person. In other words, the average merchant was forty-five times as wealthy as the average baker. A few artisans, such as Paul Revere, prospered and became manufacturers after the war, but on the whole the artisan class prospered only slightly.

Of course the consequences of independence cannot be measured solely in economic terms. The artisans gained significantly in terms of political freedom and self-respect. As David Montgomery writes, the artisans, or "mechanics" as they later called themselves, "proudly preserved the ideological heritage" of the Revolution, a heritage that "blended Ben Franklin's maxims with Tom Paine's 'rights of man'."

In the years after the Revolution the leading artisans abandoned radical republicanism and joined the merchants of the Federalist party in supporting the new Constitution. Sam Adams, a chief opponent of the proposed Constitution (on the grounds that it would provide inadequate democratic representation), was stunned when the artisans and mechanics of the North End met at the Green Dragon Tavern and unanimously endorsed resolutions favoring the new Federalist Constitution. Adams was given clear warning that if he opposed the ratification of the document he would "act contrary to the best interest, the strongest feelings, and warmest wishes of the tradesmen of the town of Boston."

It is not clear that the Green Dragon resolutions reflected the politics of all artisans and mechanics, let alone the laborers who had comprised the Revolutionary crowds. Many common people were undoubtedly worried about the growing political power of the merchants in town politics. Indeed, in 1786 artisans and mechanics blocked a merchant faction that wanted to introduce a new form of government to replace the town meeting; this reform smacked of "aristocracy," according to Sam Adams. Furthermore, the artisans' support for the new federal Constitution did not necessarily reflect conservatism. Urban artisans in other parts of the new nation joined the famous radical republican Tom Paine in endorsing the Constitution because it was seen as a "direct continuation of the



Procession.

BOSTON, OCT. 19, 1789.

AS this town is ſhortly to be honoured with a viſit from THE PRESIDENT of the United States: In order that we may pay our reſpects to him, in a manner whereby every inhabitant may ſee ſo illuſtrious and amiable a character, and to prevent the diſorder and danger which muſt enſue from a great aſſembly of people without order, a Committee appointed by a reſpectable number of inhabitants, met for the purpoſe, recommend to their Fellow-Citizens to arrange themſelves in the following order, in a

PROCESSION.

IT is alſo recommended, that the perſon who ſhall be choſen as head of each order of Artizans, Tradeſmen, Manufacturers, &c. ſhall be known by diſplaying a WHITE FLAG, with ſome device thereon expreſſive of their ſeveral callings—and to be numbered as in the arrangement that follows, which is alphabetically diſpoſed, in order to give general ſatisfaction.—The Artizans, &c. to diſplay ſuch inſignia of their craft, as they can conveniently carry in their hands. That uniformity may not be wanting, it is deſired that the ſeveral Flag-ſtaffs be SEVEN feet long, and the Flags a YARD SQUARE.

ORDER OF PROCESSION.

MUSICK.

The Selectmen,
Overſeers of the Poor,
Town Treaſurer,
Town Clerk,
Magiſtrates,
Conſuls of France and Holland,
The Officers of his Moſt Chriſtian Majeſty's Squadron,
The Rev. Clergy,
Phyſicians,
Lawyers,
Merchants and Traders,
Marine Society,
Maſters of veſſels,
Revenue Officers,
Strangers, who may wiſh to attend.

Bakers, No. 1.
Blackſmiths, &c. No. 2.
Block-makers, No. 3.
Boat-builders, No. 4.
Cabinet and Chair-makers, No. 5.
Card-makers, No. 6.
Carvers, No. 7.
Chaiſe and Coach-makers, No. 8.
Clock and Watch-makers, No. 9.
Coopers, No. 10.
Copperſmiths, Braziers and Founders, No. 11.
Cordwainers, &c. No. 12.
Diſtillers, No. 13.
Duck Manufacturers, No. 14.
Engravers, No. 15.
Glaziers and Plumbers, No. 16.
Goldſmiths and Jewellers, No. 17.
Hair-Dreſſers, No. 18.
Hatters and Furriers, No. 19.
Houſe Carpenters, No. 20.
Leather Dreſſers, and Leather-Breeches Makers, No. 21.
Limners and Portrait Painters, No. 22.
Maſons, No. 23.
Maſt-makers, No. 24.
Mathematical Inſtrument-makers, No. 25.
Millers, No. 26.
Painters, No. 27.
Paper Stainers, No. 28.
Pewterers, No. 29.
Printers, Book-binders and Stationers, No. 30.
Riggers, No. 31.
Rope-makers, No. 32.
Saddlers, No. 33.
Sail-makers, No. 34.
Shipwrights, to include Caulkers, Ship-Joiners, Head-builders and Sawyers, No. 35.
Sugar-boilers, No. 36.
Tallow-Chandlers, &c. No. 37.
Tanners, No. 38.
Taylors, No. 39.
Tin-plate Workers, No. 40.
Tobacconiſts, No. 41.
Truckmen, No. 42.
Turners, No. 43.
Upholſterers, No. 44.
Wharfingers, No. 45.
Wheelwights, No. 46.
Seamen,

N. B.—In the above arrangement, ſome trades are omitted—from the idea, that they would incorporate themſelves with the kindred trades mentioned, to which they are generally attached. For inſtance—it is ſuppoſed, that under the head of *Blackſmiths*, the Armourers, Cutlers, Whitesmiths and other workers in iron, would be included; and the ſame with reſpect to other trades.

EACH diviſion of the above arrangement is requeſted to meet on ſuch parade as it may agree on, and march into the Mall—No. 1 of the Artizans, &c. forming at the South-end thereof. The Marſhals will then direct in what manner the Proceſſion will move to meet the Preſident on his arrival in town. When the front of the Proceſſion arrives at the extremity of the town, it will halt, and the wheels will then be directed to open the column—one half of each rank moving to the right, and the other half to the left—and then face inwards, ſo as to form an avenue through which the Preſident is to paſs, to the galleries to be erected at the State-Houſe.

IT is requeſted that the ſeveral School-maſters conduct their Scholars to the neighbourhood of the State-Houſe, and form them in ſuch order as the Marſhals ſhall direct.

THE Marine Society is deſired to appoint ſome perſons to arrange and accompany the ſeamen.

Broadside of 1789, honoring George Washington
Source: American Antiquarian Society

independence struggle" and a way of allowing the national government to encourage commerce and provide protection for artisan-manufacturers. In other words, many artisan radicals parted company with Sam Adams on the Constitution because they saw no conflict between support for a stronger central government and defense of their egalitarian or republican ideals. This helps to explain the apparent deference of Boston artisans to the political leadership of merchants and other well-to-do Federalists.

The complexity of post-Revolutionary politics in Boston was reflected in an important parade organized to honor President George Washington

during his triumphal visit in 1789. A long column of citizens was headed by newly elected government officials, indicating the new commonwealth's pride in self-government, but the clergy, professionals, and merchants preceded the artisans and workers in the parade. The trades were ordered alphabetically in order to "give general satisfaction" among the artisans, but each trade selected its wealthiest member to carry the banner at the head of its formation. The more prosperous artisans formed a Mechanics Association in 1795 in order to further their goals as manufacturers and to win the support of the wealthy merchants.

The merchant princes dominated the town's politics just as they dominated its economics. Mercantilism remained, but it now existed under a national rather than a colonial regime. After the Revolution, "mercantilists constantly labored to build a tightly organized and protected national market and to increase their share of the world market," writes historian William Appleman Williams. "By 1785, for example, most of the states, including the agrarian ones, were switching from tariffs for revenue to tariffs for international retaliation and protection. Merchants demanded American navigation acts, artisans agitated for protection of their labor," and the new manufacturing interest made its first demand for a protective tariff.

In Boston, for example, an artisan (or "mechanik") was elected from each of the twenty-six different trades to form a standing committee called "The Association of the Tradesmen and Manufacturers of the Town of Boston." At this point most of the manufacturers were master artisans who had expanded their own shops by hiring journeymen to work under them. Industrial capitalism, requiring large investments and factories, had not yet appeared. The new association, Boston's first union of trades, called for restrictions on the importation of articles made abroad and opposed the use of British shipping when the city's shipbuilding industry was in crisis. By the time Washington visited in 1789, the Boston association, along with other groups of its kind, had secured a national protective tariff.

As a result, artisans and manufacturers enjoyed new prosperity in the 1790s, but their wealth could not compare to that of the merchant princes, who could now engage in the lucrative commercial trade without paying imperial duties or conforming to colonial restrictions. In Boston a new merchant elite, including important Essex County families like the Cabots and the Lowells, filled the power vacuum created by the exodus of the Tory merchants. This so-called Essex County Junto, enriched by trade, especially the China trade, ruled Boston for several decades. The wealthy merchant families lived in elegant houses (some of them designed by Charles Bulfinch), founded charitable and cultural institutions, organized the Federalist party which remained dominant until the 1820s, and invested their substantial fortunes in textile towns such as Lowell. The Essex Junto's political domination of Boston seemed assured when Fisher Ames, a well-to-do Federalist, defeated old Samuel Adams for Congress in 1790.

During the early 1800s Boston remained a Federalist town dominated by its merchant elite, but signs of class conflict reappeared, especially in relations between master artisans, including manufacturers, and their journeymen employees. The old community of interest between the two was breaking up. Agreements between parties, once sealed by a handshake, now required a written contract. In 1806 efforts to form trade unions were discouraged when Philadelphia shoemakers were prosecuted for criminal conspiracy after organizing a "combination." Therefore, in the 1820s printers in Philadelphia and Boston formed "friendly societies" instead of unions because these groups admitted both employers and employees. However, as Professor Montgomery shows, many societies, composed primarily of journeymen, that "sought to combine benevolent functions with the enforcement of union wage scales ultimately found it necessary to expel members who had risen to the rank of employers."

Few of the early journeymen's societies survived the depression of 1819-1822, but when prosperity returned, workers' activity increased. Most of that activity concerned the provision of sickness and death benefits and enforcement of minimum wages or prices. However, early labor organizations were

also concerned with regulating work rules that governed entry to the trade, the quality of goods produced, and the length of the working day.

In 1825 Boston ship carpenters conducted the first modern strike in the city's history, demanding shorter hours. Master carpenters, or manufacturers, made common cause with merchant capitalists who invested in the shipbuilding industry; the employers condemned the ten-hour day because it would "exert a very unhappy influence on our apprentices, by seducing them from that course of industry and economy of time, to which we are anxious to enure them." The ten-hour day would also expose the Journeymen themselves "to many improvident temptations and practices." The ship carpenters' combination for the purposes of a strike was an un-American act introduced by foreigners who carried with them "a spirit of discontent." (This would not be the last time that Massachusetts employers blamed militant labor action on the influence of outside agitators.) In any case, the ship carpenters lost the 1825 strike for a shorter working day; they lost this battle against the combined strength of their employers, the merchants, the press, and the pulpit, but they started a long struggle for the shorter working day in Boston, which we describe in the next chapter. It was to be a struggle in which the community of interest between the master manufacturer and the journeymen laborers disappeared in a conflict over control of work at the point of production.

Despite the loss of this important strike, Boston workers remained very active for the next dozen years; in fact, their grievances took on an increasingly political orientation. This orientation was reflected in the formation of a Workingmen's party in 1830. The first labor party was not based solely upon the class interests of wage earners. Instead, its leaders spoke to all honest producers whose interests were not represented by the merchant-dominated Federalist party or the Democratic party, which at the national level was dominated by the southern planter class. As the liberal Unitarian minister Edward Everett told the Charlestown Lyceum in 1831, the aim of the Workingmen's party was not simply to "elevate this or that candidate for office, but to promote the prosperity and welfare of working men; that is, to secure to every man disposed to work, the greatest freedom in the choice of his pursuit, the greatest encouragement and aid in pursuing it, the greatest security in enjoying its fruits:—in other words, to make *work*, in greatest possible degree, produce *happiness*."

The Workingmen's party of Boston looked backward to the colonial ideal of the honest producer, who made a high-quality product for a just price. This view was consistent with the labor theory of value, or the notion that the producer deserved the full product of his labor whether he was a farmer, an artisan, or a manufacturer. The Workingmen's party of Boston, which only lasted a short time, looked for leadership to well-to-do men, including some shipbuilders, who shared the view that honest labor should be rewarded, and that representatives of the producers should make laws rather than representatives of the idle rich, who sought to protect monopoly interests. Like the radical republicans of the American Revolution, the labor radicals of the early 1800s drew upon the theory of English philosopher John Locke, who argued that labor was the only real title to property. Liberty and property were linked in the politics of the Revolution. The new republican government would protect both liberty and property, thus insuring the growth of an egalitarian commonwealth.

In the first decades of the nineteenth century labor radicals were deeply troubled by the continuing rise of an idle class of rich people—in the North as well as the South—whose wealth was not based upon their own labor but upon that of wage slaves in the North and chattel slaves in the South. Charles Douglas, who founded the *New England Artisan* in 1831 and played a leading role in supporting independent workingmen's parties and in organizing Boston trades into labor unions, placed lawyers, judges, and lawmakers in the camp of the idle rich. It was "by the force of unjust laws, which the people have not made, which they never consented to, and can never comprehend, that property is gradually passing into a few hands, and is made sure to a few rich families while the mass of the people are fleeced, and made to pass their lives in toil." In Douglas's view, lawyers were the agents of the rich who wrote laws that became "wicked

instruments of oppression."

Theophilius Fisk, a radical Universalist minister who lectured to Boston trade unionists in the 1830s, claimed that the trial of striking journeymen tailors exemplified the class nature of the courts. In a favorably received address called "Capital Against Labor," Reverend Fisk warned workers not to expect fair treatment from "tribunals where men set themselves up as lawful organs" to keep "one class as mere slaves of the other." John Ferrall, another radical who became active in the turbulent Boston labor scene of the 1830s, summarized the essence of this growing wave of dissent when he asked; if the idle rich live off the working poor, "who is there that can term such a monstrous state of things, a community considered as one family?" Unlike Edward Everett and the leaders of the short-lived Workingmen's party, who wanted to restore the sense of community that existed between the classes during the Revolutionary War, Reverend Fisk looked to a future of conflict between labor and capital. If the "robbers" at the top of society continued to exploit the community, what "sane mind," asked Fisk, would attempt to "amalgamate these two parties, and call them one family?"

Like Charles Douglas, John Ferrall, and Reverend Fisk, Seth Luther, a radical artisan from Rhode Island, traveled to Boston at this time to be part of the city's labor movement. A journeyman carpenter and a self-taught orator and agitator, Luther eloquently expressed the anger of the New England artisan and laborer. Arriving in Boston during the carpenters' ten-hour strike in 1832 (described in the next chapter), Luther delivered an address to the strikers that, according to Edward Pessen, "evoked an instantaneous and enthusiastic response from the workers." Seth Luther's 1832 "Address to the Workingmen of New England" was delivered subsequently in many towns of the region, and when published quickly went through three editions. Luther called into question the very success of the Revolution against British monarchy and tyranny. Appealing to the New England laborers' sense of natural rights, he said:

> When we reflect on the sufferings and privations of our fathers in the days of our Revolution, when we read of their undying zeal, and untiring efforts in the war of Liberty; when we look towards the *Holy Hill* . . . where blood flowed like water from the hearts of free men, we feel it incumbent upon us to sound an *alarm* when our rights are not only endangered, but some of them already wrested from us by the . . . inhuman group of monopolized wealth.

Had the people of New England fought to overthrow royal tyranny, only to find themselves subjects of a new, republican tyranny of wealth and privilege? Were the artisans and laborers who combined to fight the redcoats and to fight the fires that threatened to destroy property now to be prosecuted for combining to defend their own natural rights in strikes and trade unions?

> Men of property find no fault in combinations to extinguish *fires* and protect their *precious persons* from danger. But if *poor men* ask JUSTICE, it is a most HORRIBLE COMBINATION. The Declaration of Independence was the work of a combination, and was as hateful to the TRAITORS and TORIES of those days, as comcombinations among working men are now to the *avaricious* MONOPOLIST and *purse-proud* ARISTOCRAT. . . . Was there no combination, when Bostonians, in the disguise of Mohawk Indians, made a dish of TEA at the expense of *King George* the *Third*, using Boston harbour for a tea-pot? . . . Was there no combination, when the leather apron of the farmer and mechanic were seen mingling with the shining uniform of the 'British Regulars', and when that class, who are *now* so *despised* by the HIGHER ORDERS, achieved our 'independence?'

Seth Luther's powerful attack on "purse-proud aristocrats" drew upon republican traditions of equality established during the War of Liberty and the popular actions that preceded it. His defense of workers' natural rights as citizens as well as producers also drew upon revolutionary traditions. Luther's assertion of workers' right to combine on behalf of their own interests looked ahead to a time

when workers would have to organize not only as wage earners or "economic men" but as citizens who did not live for work alone. As we shall see in the next chapters, Boston's workers organized to achieve a shorter, more humane working day in which laborers would have more liberty to engage in affairs of community and family.

2

The Struggle for the Shorter Working Day

As the disparity between rich and poor in Boston continued to increase during the nineteenth century, the city's workers responded not only with strikes for higher wages but with various campaigns for a shorter, more humane working day. Confronted with effective combinations among merchants, lawyers, and other businessmen, Boston's wage earners formed trade unions (considered illegal conspiracies until 1842) as well as reform leagues and independent labor parties. The struggle for the shorter working day, beginning with the "Ten Hour Circular" in 1835 and culminating in the great May Day Strike for the Eight-Hour Day in 1886, occupies a central place in the city's labor history.

The importance of this crusade for shorter hours, which also involved demands for better working conditions, shows that Boston's workers were not narrow "economic men" concerned only with higher wages. The movement for the ten-hour day and then the eight-hour day revealed the significant political influence of working people in the nineteenth-century commonwealth and its capital city. The pioneering role played by Massachusetts legislators in factory legislation enacted in both Boston and Washington resulted largely from the demands of their working-class constituents. Like the reform-minded Republicans of the Civil War era, who enacted the first factory legislation, Josiah Quincy IV, the last of the Yankee reformers in the Democratic party, gained working-class votes by championing shorter-hours legislation. Quincy actually used his reputation as a labor reformer to win election as mayor of Boston in 1895. His administration saw the shortening of hours for several groups of city workers, but it also revealed the limits of labor reform within the two-party system.

Although Boston came to be known as the "Athens of America" in the early 1800s because of its cultural and political activities, the city was not the closely knit community some historians have described. Since the American Revolution, little had altered gross inequality in property ownership. In 1820, Boston's richest 10 percent owned slightly more than 50 percent of the city's wealth. Profits from the War of 1812, coupled with manufacturing income allowed to merchants, widened the economic gap between Boston's rich and poor.

With the new income, Brahmins moved from older neighborhoods to modern town houses on Beacon Hill. During the Revolution, the North End was a mixed neighborhood of the wealthy, artisans, and laborers. By the early 1800s, the North End was deteriorating into a slum. The wealthy made a similar exodus from Fort Hill, and moved either to Beacon Hill or to the suburbs. As historian Edward Pessen noted, 26 percent of Boston's richest families lived on Mount Vernon or Beacon streets by the late 1840s. These families had an average wealth of $125,000 to $160,000. The average wealth of all residents in North End wards had not risen above the $523 per capita recorded in 1835.

As the gap between the rich and poor became more obvious in Boston during the early 1800s, the conservative Federalist elite began to fear that the politics of deference would break down. And as Boston grew, the old communal institutions which used to care for the poor became strained. Reverend Joseph Tuckerman, who ministered to the growing masses of poor in Boston, wrote in the 1820s: "Men are not only divided and separated by great inequalities of their condition in respect to property, but by the very fact of their large num-

bers. Every individual in the different classes may . . . be unknown to many even of the class to which they belong."

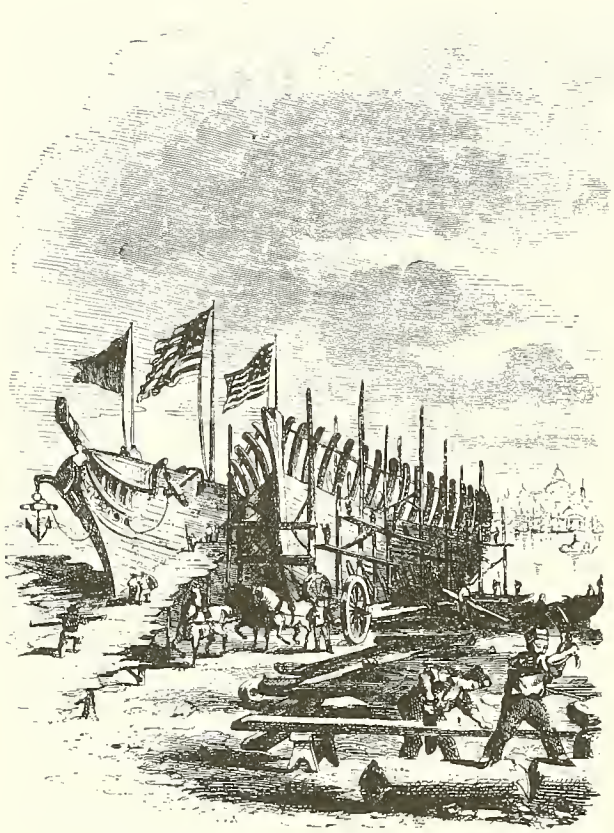
During this period Boston's famous town meeting was becoming increasingly raucous, partly as a result of demands by artisans and laborers for improved working conditions. Critical of the town meeting as a disorderly forum, the elite proposed that Boston be incorporated as a city, to be governed by a mayor and common council. The Federalist elite wanted the council to be elected on an at-large basis in order to enable wealthy, influential candidates to serve in the "public interest." But the working people were beginning to question the public spirit of Federalist politicians who also used politics to protect their private commercial interests. The new charter became law in 1822 and Boston was officially incorporated as a city, but in order to win the labor vote, the proponents of the charter were forced to abandon a common council elected at large in favor of one elected on a ward basis.

After the charter made Boston a city in 1822, a remarkable politician named Josiah Quincy II became mayor. He ruled during a breakdown of what his biographer, Robert McCaughey, calls the "civic ties that had . . . transcended class lines" and bound the community together. In the colonial period the city's poor were either warned out (that is, ordered to leave) or provided for through "outdoor relief" provided directly to the poor or their families. In 1820 Quincy headed an important state committee that called for an end to outdoor relief and community support for the poor. Instead, the Quincy committee called for the creation of almshouses, to remove the poor from the community, incarcerate them, and reform them by inculcating the work ethic. As historian David Rothman remarks in his award-winning book, *The Discovery of the Asylum*, "The influential Quincy report was filled with unqualified testimony on the power of the institution to terrorize the poor and keep them off the relief rolls."

"The poor," Quincy wrote in 1821, are like "the vicious and the criminal"—all were "necessary parts of the social system." But the "idle and vicious poor" could no longer be a part of the community; they would have to be subject to "coercive restraint" and forced labor. Quincy became mayor after serving on a committee to establish a House of Industry for the idle poor. According to Professor McCaughey, he had deplored the Overseers of the Poor for relying on outdoor relief, and for "boarding the poor 'on the town' and allowing them to remain part of the community, on the grounds that this cost more than institutionalization and indulged the poor by exacting no work from them." It was no surprise, then, that one of Mayor Quincy's first official acts was to order the transfer of all the able-bodied poor to the new House of Industry in South Boston. By the end of the 1820s most of the poor, regardless of their physical condition, were incarcerated in South Boston, where they hammered stone all day.

Although Quincy distinguished between the "honest poor" and the "idle poor," working-class people in general were concerned about the mayor's efforts to discipline those living in poverty. Boston's second mayor may have established a reputation as a reformer, but he was remembered more warmly by the merchants who received a new market (named for Quincy) than by the workers who received the House of Industry. Toward the end of his term the major provoked public wrath by closing the high school for girls. Quincy's critics quote the mayor as saying, "If this school is continued, by and by, the education of our servant girls will be equal to that of our daughters, and perhaps enable them to form connections with our sons!" Whether the mayor actually expressed this view is not clear. What is clear, however, is that the closing of the girls' high school cost Quincy reelection in 1828. The Boston *Patriot* credited the "laboring class vote" with the defeat of a mayor whom it attacked for "haughty anti-republican manners."

As the rich grew richer and the poor became more numerous in Boston, civic ties loosened and social relations deteriorated. Even before the coming of the Irish, the gap between the classes was widening and deferential support of wealthy politicians was weakening. In this context, the artisans and mechanics who had taken a leading role in Revolutionary War politics became more critical



East Boston Shipyards, origin of the struggle for a shorter working day

of the social order. They complained not only of the impoverishment of honest working people, but also of the degradation of the laborer, who was forced to work the same long hours without the protection of the old customs that guaranteed the artisan a just price. When workers attempted in the 1820s and 1830s to form unions to hold up prices, their efforts were attacked in the courts as criminal conspiracies. Unable to organize effectively in the economic realm, workers decided to form their own political party. Unable to maintain just prices in a free and unregulated marketplace, workers organized to petition and agitate for shorter working hours.

The movement for the ten-hour day, which was propelled by the Boston carpenters' strike of 1825, reached a climax in the Hub. In 1832 the city's shipwrights actually struck for the reduction of the traditional sunup-to-sundown working day. Indeed, the city's workers called a ten-hour-day convention on the same day the ships' carpenters initiated their daring walkout: March 20, 1832. Boston artisans and shipwrights received support for the ten-hour-day crusade from another organization, the New England Association of Farmers, Mechanics and Other Workingmen, which was founded in 1831. This association contributed financial support to the strike and pledged to expel all members who worked for more than ten hours a day after March 20, 1832.

The striking shipwrights issued the following statement to the Boston *Patriot*:

> We presume it is well known to most of you that a society has been formed by the shipwrights and chaulkers of this city and Charlestown, for their mutual benefit, and to regulate the days' work and the number of hours to constitute them. We were formerly required to be in . . . by sunrise, and labor until sunset, in the longest days, allowing hardly time to get our meals; and if any one of us should happen to be tardy, the finger of scorn was pointed at him, or our employer would say, where have you been, or if you do not come sooner, I'll not employ you any more.

Faced with the unified opposition of the employers, the shipwrights decided that they would have to stand together. The statement concluded:

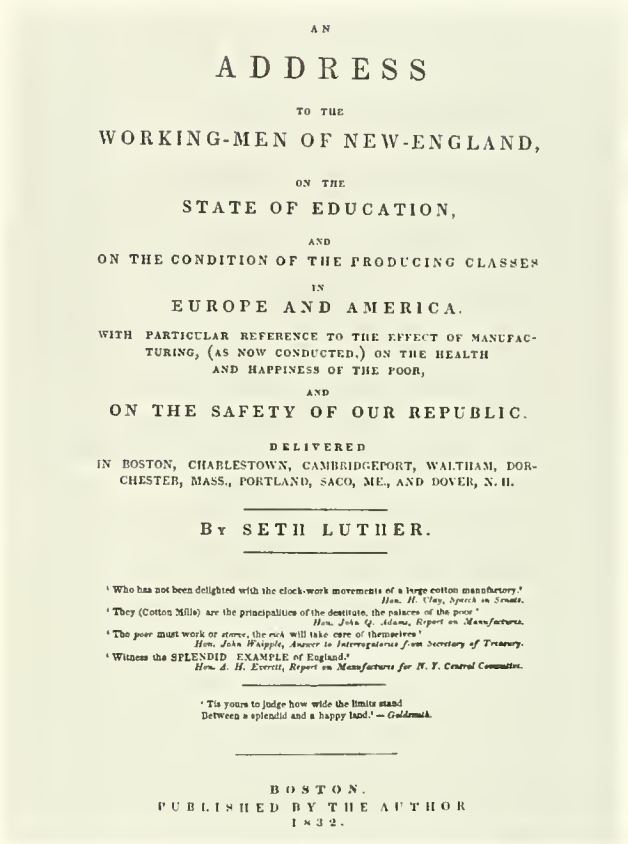
> We were all born free and equal, and we do not ask to have our grievances redressed as a favor. We demand it as a right. . . . We have come to this conclusion as it respects the number of hours we ought to labour. We think ten hours per day is as much as ought to be done, considering our business is the hardest and most trying to the constitution as any other. We do not upon an average make more than one dollar per day. We cannot work when other mechanics can. It is well known by most of you that in wet weather we don't work, or in very cold weather. One third part of the time is lost to us. It has been stated at the merchants' meeting that our men are paid liber-

ally; but what does it amount to when we lose so much time. There is but very few of us that can, at the end of the year, make both ends meet.

The merchants and shipyard owners, who lost work crews to the strike, issued a counterpetition which upheld the unregulated labor market and open shop. One hundred employers signed a statement that "labor ought always to be left free to regulate itself, and that neither the employer nor the employed should have the power to control the other." They went on to express the view that they as merchants and shipyard owners knew the measures that would benefit the shipyard workers better than the striking shipwrights and caulkers. "[A]ll combinations to regulate the price and the hours of labour . . . are at all times attended with pernicious consequences, and especially to those individuals whose interests they are intended to promote," the capitalists concluded.

Seth Luther, speaking for the striking carpenters, denounced the employers and judges as hypocrites for refusing to allow workers to combine into unions when the shipward owners and merchants had formed a "detestable combination" in order to drive the ship carpenters of Boston "into starvation or submission." The defeat of the 1832 ten-hour strike helps to explain the bitterness of Luther's "Address to the Workingmen of New England." Luther, like other labor radicals of the 1830s, hated the idle rich who profited at the expense of struggling workers.

The radicals' charge that the rich were getting richer is borne out by the statistics on wealth collected by historian Edward Pessen. In 1820, the richest one percent of the population owned 16 percent of the wealth; by 1833 this elite had doubled its share to 32 percent. The rich were benefiting tremendously from the laissez-faire economy of the period. The Jacksonian "Age of the Common Man" saw little economic advancement for the poor. While the richest one percent owned 32 percent of the wealth in 1833, the common men of the city—that is, those who owned less than $5,000 worth of property (86 percent of the population)—only owned 14 percent of the city's wealth. In the same year a federal report indicated that skilled workers had suffered a loss of income. Unskilled workers,



AN

ADDRESS

TO THE

WORKING-MEN OF NEW-ENGLAND,

ON THE

STATE OF EDUCATION,

AND

ON THE CONDITION OF THE PRODUCING CLASSES

IN

EUROPE AND AMERICA.

WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE EFFECT OF MANUFACTURING, (AS NOW CONDUCTED,) ON THE HEALTH AND HAPPINESS OF THE POOR,

AND

ON THE SAFETY OF OUR REPUBLIC.

DELIVERED

IN BOSTON, CHARLESTOWN, CAMBRIDGEPORT, WALTHAM, DORCHESTER, MASS., PORTLAND, SACO, ME., AND DOVER, N. H.

By SETH LUTHER.

'Who has not been delighted with the clock-work movements of a large cotton manufactory.'
Hon. H. Otis, Speech in Senate.

'They (Cotton Mills) are the principalities of the destitute, the palaces of the poor.'
Hon. John Q. Adams, Report on Manufactures.

'The *poor* must work or *starve*, the *rich* will take care of themselves.'
Hon. John Whipple, Answer to Interrogatories from Secretary of Treasury.

'Witness the SPLENDID EXAMPLE of England.'
Hon. A. H. Everett, Report on Manufactures for N. Y. Central Committee.

'Tis yours to judge how wide the limits stand
Between a splendid and a happy land.' — *Goldsmith.*

BOSTON.
PUBLISHED BY THE AUTHOR
1832.

Title page, Seth Luther's "Address"

or operatives, were tending more to turn out, or strike, against their employers because they labored for such long hours. Despite the return of prosperity, says Pessen, there was a rise in the proportion of paupers and the number of poor people confined to the House of Industry in South Boston.

To fight against increasing degradation, Boston's mechanics and operatives took to striking and to organizing trade unions and ten-hour-day campaigns. In 1834 organized workers in sixteen trades combined to form the Boston Trades Union (BTU). This umbrella organization, one of the first of its kind, was motivated in part by the failure of the shipyard workers' strike of 1832. Faced with powerful combinations among capitalists, Boston's workers reaffirmed their need to "swim together." At its peak, the Boston Trades Union claimed four

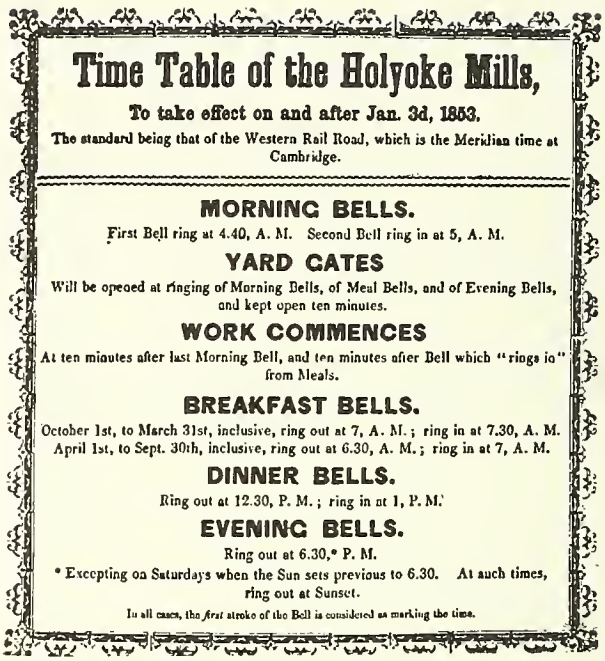
thousand members, and focused its efforts on securing the ten-hour day.

In early May of 1835, the ships' carpenters, masons, and stonecutters turned out for the ten-hour day. Journeymen house carpenters joined the striking building-trades men in July; in a demonstration of support, they marched through wealthy neighborhoods singing the "Marseillaise." At the start of the strike Theophilius Fisk, editor of the Boston *Reformer,* strenuously urged the strikers "to fight for not the ten hour, but the eight hour day. . . . Eight hours for work, eight hours for sleep, eight hours for amusement and instruction." But Fisk's call for the eight-hour day was premature in 1835, for the combined power of the master builders, merchant capitalists, and newspaper publishers defeated the strike for the ten-hour day.

The 1835 strike produced the "Ten Hour Circular." Authored by three Boston craftsmen with assistance from Seth Luther, the circular looked back to the ideals of the American Revolution. "We claim by the blood of our fathers, shed on our battle fields in the War of the Revolution, the rights of American freemen, and no earthly powers shall resist our claims with impunity," it exclaimed. The circular undermined employers' complaints that shorter hours corrupted workers. It asked employers—who were now called "grinders"—why they expressed no concern about their employees' idleness in the slack winter months, when lack of work put laborers out of employment for periods of time.

The "Ten Hour Circular" was paradoxically more influential in Philadelphia than in Boston. A stronger, larger artisan community in Philadelphia struck effectively for the ten-hour day. The craftsmen there replaced the dawn-to-dusk system with a six-to-six system, which included an hour for breakfast and an hour for lunch.

The struggle for the shorter working day in Boston threatened to spread to the outlying mill towns such as Lowell, where female operatives struck against wage cuts in 1834 and 1836. How did the agitation for a shorter work day in the cities affect the "tyranny in the mills" asked Seth Luther in his famous 1832 address. "We answer, that the owners of the mills oppose all reduction in the hours of labour, for the purposes of mental culture," Luther



Time Table of the Holyoke Mills,

To take effect on and after Jan. 3d, 1853.

The standard being that of the Western Rail Road, which is the Meridian time at Cambridge.

MORNING BELLS.

First Bell ring at 4.40, A. M. Second Bell ring in at 5, A. M.

YARD GATES

Will be opened at ringing of Morning Bells, of Meal Bells, and of Evening Bells, and kept open ten minutes.

WORK COMMENCES

At ten minutes after last Morning Bell, and ten minutes after Bell which "rings in" from Meals.

BREAKFAST BELLS.

October 1st, to March 31st, inclusive, ring out at 7, A. M.; ring in at 7.30, A. M.
April 1st, to Sept. 30th, inclusive, ring out at 6.30, A. M.; ring in at 7, A. M.

DINNER BELLS.

Ring out at 12.30, P. M.; ring in at 1, P. M.

EVENING BELLS.

Ring out at 6.30,* P. M.

* Excepting on Saturdays when the Sun sets previous to 6.30. At such times, ring out at Sunset.

In all cases, the *first* stroke of the Bell is considered as marking the time.

Long workdays in New England textile plants made mill operatives strong supporters of a shorter working day

declared. "Not that they care about the hours of labour in the *Cities,* but they fear the 'contagion' will reach their SLAVE MILLS. Hence they go into the shop of the Carpenter . . . and actually *forbid* them to employ what they sneeringly call *'ten hour* men'." Luther went on to charge that the thirteen hours of labor required by the mill owners made it impossible for children to go to school or for adults to improve themselves. "The whole system of labor in New England," said the address, "is a cruel system of extraction on the bodies and minds of the producing classes, destroying the energies of both, and for no other object than to enable the 'rich' to 'take care of themselves' while the poor must work or starve." In a concluding burst, Luther said that there were "*many* beautiful and virtuous ladies employed in the cotton mills, but we do know, notwithstanding this, that the *wives* and *daughters* of the rich would no more associate with a 'factory girl' than they would with a *Negro* slave."

In the 1840s, women textile workers led by Sarah Bagley, the mill operative who headed the Lowell

Female Reform Association, fought for the ten-hour day. Several ambitious politicians, notably Ben Butler, Nathaniel Banks, and Henry Wilson, endorsed the ten-hour demand. The operatives were blacklisted for advocating the ten-hour day, however, and the manufacturers blocked legislation in the General Court to regulate hours of work.

Inspired by the Lowell Female Reform Association, a number of trade union and labor reform organizations joined together to establish producers' cooperatives. According to Boston's first labor historian George McNeill, the New England Workingmen's Association resolved in 1845 that concerted cooperative action was the only means of ameliorating the condition of working people. Another organization, the New England Protective Union, carried on the struggle to "strike at the root of poverty" by securing "good pay and fewer hours of labor." Since the question of the working day was critical, the Union stated: "The dollar was to us of minor importance; humanitary and not mercenary were our motives." According to McNeill, "they believed that by the organization of cooperative industry, labor-saving machinery would labor for instead of against the interest of the poor." The Protective Union asserted further that:

> "muscles are now made to compete with iron machines that need no rest, that have no affections, eat no bread. Why is he who produces everything not only destitute of the luxuries but of the common comforts of life, to say nothing of a shelter he can call his own?" . . . Speaking of the newly-invented sewing machine, they [said:] "Let us take this and kindred machines and christen them for the good of the race by shortening the hours of labor, while at the same time we increase the product of labor."

Although many Boston reformers shifted their attention from factory legislation to the movement against slavery in the South, some radicals linked the evils of wage slavery in the factory and chattel slavery on the plantation. In May of 1848 the Franklin Typographical Society—named for Boston's most famous artisan—called a mass meeting of workers at Faneuil Hall. The assembly endorsed resolutions on behalf of a shorter working day and warmly supported the French revolutionaries of 1848 and the British Chartists who led the struggle for workers' rights as well as the abortive Irish rebellion of the same year. Significantly, the Faneuil Hall congregation also condemned "the despotic . . . Slave Power in the South, and the domineering ascendency of the monied oligarchy in the North as equally hostile to the interests of labor, and incompatible with the preservation of popular rights."

The antislavery crusade may have captured the attention of the single-minded radicals who followed William Lloyd Garrison and read his Boston-based newspaper, *The Liberator*, but during the 1840s many abolitionists and other reformers found themselves also engaged in the great "factory controversy." After receiving fulsome praise, model factory towns such as Lawrence and Lowell came under intense criticism. Most criticism centered around the working day, which actually lengthened during the 1840s, causing ill health among the operatives. The Boston capitalists and their agents led a spirited defense of the factory system. But Dr. Josiah Curtis's report on hygiene in Lowell and Boston drew some critical conclusions: "The dwelling houses of the masses," he said, "and the factories of the few are less cared for than our prisons." As a supporter of the ten-hour day and the abolition of slavery, *The Voice of Industry* declared in 1846 "that the factory system contains in itself the elements of slavery . . . and every day continues to add power to its incorporate sovereignty, while the sovereignty of working people decreases in the same ratio."

Boston workers lacked a champion as eloquent as Sarah Bagley of the Lowell Female Reform Association, but they too felt the degrading effects of the factory system. And they too questioned the new system. Although some politicians joined manufacturers in defending the factory as a republican institution, workers in the pre-Civil War period—especially the independent artisans—saw a direct contradiction between the manufacturers' absolute authority and the principles of democracy.

Boston tailors were one group of artisans dramatically affected by mechanization in manufac-

"The Great Race": Elias Howe's sewing machine, invented in Cambridge, versus five speedy seamstresses

turing. The sewing machine, invented by Elias Howe of Cambridge in 1846, became a weapon in the hands of clothing manufacturers, who used it to eliminate skilled tailors and replace them with unskilled "green hands." In the previous decade New York City ready-made clothing sold better than Boston's. When garment manufacturing in the Hub was industrialized and mechanized, however, Boston clothing factories produced more on the average than the New York shops. But Boston manufacturers had really gained their competitive advantage in producing cheap garments by reducing the tailors' wages; they paid their workers only $4.50 to $5.50 a week, while New York tailors still earned from $8.00 to $10.00. Faced with increasing speedup, Boston tailors struck in 1849, but owners kept the machines humming by hiring fishermen to break the strike.

Although machines were used by manufacturers to erode the position of the artisan, few workers attempted to destroy them. As Norman Ware wrote in his noted history of *The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860,* "The American worker was not actively opposed to machinery," but rather to "its introduction for exploitative purposes" by alien capitalists and not by producers. "For every protest against the machine industry," Ware concluded, "there can be found a hundred against the new power of capitalist production and its discipline." The old hours under the prefactory system were "appallingly long, but they were borne with better grace because discipline was slack." The protracted struggle for the shorter working day was, as Ware argues, the direct response of workers to "capitalist production and its discipline. . . ." When the traditional discipline of the boss or driver was augmented by the more severe discipline of the new industry and its machinery, "a change toward the shorter working day became inevitable."

The political and social consequences of these

changes were just as significant in Boston, a commercial city with diversified light industries, as they were in factory towns such as Lawrence and Lowell. "This expansion of industry meant the decay of the communal hopes of earlier times," writes Martin Green in his book *The Problem of Boston.* "Terrible slums developed in the city. Smallpox returned . . . , in 1849 cholera returned; tuberculosis became dangerous." Irish peasants, desperate for work and housing, huddled in the city's slums, living a precarious existence. Infant mortality rates increased. Wages in many trades decreased, especially in the depression of 1848. "Pauperism, drunkenness, prostitution and crime all spread enormously," observes Green. He concludes that "the city set on high was spoiled, and yet citizens were individually profiting by its spoliation. They were individually richer. But their wealth came from the impoverishment, debasement and brutalization of their fellow citizens."

During the 1840's, thousands of immigrants flocked to Boston from famine-ravaged Ireland. Between 1836 and 1845, before the potato famine, thirty-seven thousand Irish came to Boston. Boston industries thrived on the cheap labor of these immigrants. Between 1845 and 1855, the number of workers in the city doubled; the working day remained dawn to dusk.

The arrival of unskilled immigrant Irish workers depressed wages, and exacerbated political and religious tensions between native-born Protestant and desperate Irish-Catholic laborers. In 1834 Protestant workers, fearful that Roman Catholicism threatened their liberty, sacked and burned an Ursuline convent in Charlestown. The rioters were not urban artisans, like those who founded the Boston Trades Union, but unskilled truckmen and laborers. Many of the rioters came to Boston for work from farming communities in New England where traditions of antipopery remained alive. In 1837 a Protestant volunteer fire company attacked an Irish-Catholic funeral procession; the conflict swelled into the Broad Street riot, in which many homes were sacked. Thus even before the waves of immigrants flowed in from Ireland in the 1840s, there was a tradition of conflict between Catholic and Protestant workingmen.

The Irish Catholics formed a closed community, and, as we shall see in the next chapter, shared little of the enthusiasm of Protestant Boston for educational reform, because they feared anti-Catholicism would be taught in the public schools; for abolitionism, because they feared the competition of freed slaves from the South; or for women's rights, since Irish-Catholic peasants believed women's place was in the home. The Irish also opposed temperance reform because it was dominated by patronizing Protestants; some did join an Irish Total Abstinence Society, which they could do without fear of losing their Catholic souls to Protestant evangelicals. The Irish immigrants showed more interest in labor reform, including the ten-hour day, and labor unions, but in the pre-Civil War years the cultural issues that divided them from Protestant workers were too great to be bridged by common class interests.

The Civil War helped to remove some barriers between Boston workers; it won a measure of acceptance for Boston's Irish, who fought and died on southern battlefields. It also brought prosperity and a new sense of unity to the city's workers. The Civil War won support from northern workers, who wanted to defend free labor and to prevent the extension of slave labor into the western territories. An 100 percent increase in the cost of living, strikes, and a growing demand for the eight-hour day accompanied the war. In 1866, Boston shipyard workers struck in support of New York shipwrights, who were demanding the eight-hour day. In the same year Nathaniel Banks, a former Union general, won election as a Republican congressman from Boston after endorsing the demand for the eight-hour day.

At first Banks ignored what had become the chief issue of the labor movement, and so he won his nomination to Congress in 1865 only after overcoming the opposition of the newly formed Eight Hour League of Boston. As historian David Montgomery points out in *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872,* liberals like Banks, who supported radical reform in the defeated Confederate states, "could not long avoid" taking a stand on the eight-hour day. In fact, since Banks' congressional district in Boston was

"a labor-reform stronghold," the former general "understandably emerged by Election Day, 1866, as an ardent friend of the movement" for the eight-hour day. When Radical Republicans in Congress began hearings on the enactment of an eight-hour day for federal employees, Congressman Banks, who was married to a former Lowell mill girl who helped convert him to the cause, introduced the bill that eventually became national law in 1869.

New reform alliances developed after the Civil War as Radical Republicans sought support for their Reconstruction policies in the defeated southern states. In Boston these Republicans, represented by Congressman Banks, looked for labor support by advocating some reform legislation, and by sympathizing with the Irish nationalists or Fenians. Banks, for example, not only championed the eight-hour day for federal workers, he also led efforts to win freedom for the Fenians who were imprisoned after their abortive invasion of British Canada.

New-found unity between Irish and Yankees also appeared within the ranks of the labor movement itself. For example, Boston's excellent labor newspaper, the *Daily Evening Voice*, fully endorsed Irish independence and tacitly sanctioned the Fenians' invasion of Canada. The new alliance seemed even firmer when the labor movement in Boston nominated the Irish nationalist General Patrick Guiney for Congress on an independent ticket in 1866.

Irish workers appeared for the first time as leaders of trade unions. Both the Knights of St. Crispin and the Daughters of St. Crispin elected Catholic as well as Protestant shoe workers as their leaders. Women shoe workers who had taken a militant part in the great Lynn cordwainers' strike of 1860 were not the only female toilers to protest the double discrimination they faced as women and unskilled laborers.

During the Civil War many more women moved into factory jobs. In 1869 the *Workingmen's Advocate* published a report on "a convention of Boston work women" sensationally entitled "White Slavery in New England." In an opening address, a woman named Phelps explained that many working girls, most of them Irish, worked for slave wages. Even skilled women could not earn more than $1.50

Women at work making ammunition in a Civil War arsenal at Watertown

a day, substantially less than skilled men. But, as Phelps explained, most of the women working in Boston lacked skills:

> There are before me now women who I know to be working at the present time for less than twenty five cents a day. Some of the work they do at these rates [is] from the charitable institutions of the city. These institutions give out work to the women with the professed object of helping them, at which they can scarcely earn enough to keep them from starving; work at which for two persons, with their utmost exertions cannot earn more than forty-five cents a day. These things, I repeat, should be known to the public. They do not know how the daughters of their soldiers fare. I do. They have a little aid, to be sure, from the State, but it is only a little and they have to-day to live in miserable garrets without fire, and during the cold winters, with scanty food and insufficient clothing. . . . Do not you think that they feel the difference between their condition and that of rich, well-dressed ladies who pass them? If they did not they would be less than human. We know that there is wealth enough in this state and in this city to remedy this state of things, and that it only needs to be brought before the people to be done.

Workers like Phelps continued to believe that Massachusetts could become a true commonwealth if the grievances of the poor were brought before the people and their duly elected representatives.

When Parisian workers seized their city and established a commune in 1871, influential Americans reacted even more hysterically than they did to the violent phases of the French Revolution. George McNeill, who helped found the Eight Hour League in Boston and served as the deputy director of the State Bureau of Labor Statistics when it was established in 1869, spoke for other labor reformers when he reassured Americans that workers would not take up arms. "No cry of 'commune' can frighten the descendants of the New England commune," McNeill declared, because Massachusetts was still a commonwealth whose citizens would refuse to be ruled by "*class* wealth." If McNeill's rhetoric appealed to an illusory sense of community, it reflected accurately the immense faith labor reformers put in the democratic system. Wendell Phillips, one of the few abolitionists to take up the cause of wage slaves, told a Boston audience in 1871 that the "working masses" were "really about to put their hands to the work of governing." Unless workers took immediate action through independent labor politics, Phillips insisted "an actual outbreak of violence" might occur. Discussion was all right when every person had enough to eat, but the lesson of the French Revolution was that "discussion is bad when a class bends under actual oppression."

Phillips's call for an independent labor party came after several years of cooperation between labor reformers and Radical Republicans. The alliance did not survive into the 1870s because, as David Montgomery argues in *Beyond Equality*, the Radical Republicans, as defenders of the free labor contract, could not support the labor movement's demand for an eight-hour day. As Professor Montgomery concludes:

> In other words, at the very time Radical Republicans were wrestling enthusiastically with the extension of legal equality to Negroes, they were facing other problems, often less to their liking. Prominent among them was the insistence of labor's spokesmen that social reconstruction be extended northward. 'So must our dinner tables be reconstructed,' demanded the Boston Labor Reform Association in 1865, 'our dress, manners, education, morals, dwellings, and the whole Social System.'

"Equality before the law with a securely unified nation," was the Radical Republicans' goal, Montgomery remarks. But "beyond equality" of civil rights for the reconstructed South "lay demands of wage earners"—notably the eight-hour day—for which the Republican formula of political liberty, free labor, and free soil "provided no meaningful answer." In other words, class conflict was the "submerged shoal" upon which the Republican-labor alliance foundered.

Republicans believed that a free labor system

George McNeill, co-founder of the Boston Eight Hour League with Ira Steward, and later secretary-treasurer of the Knights of Labor District Assembly 30, largest in the nation

existed in the North (and developed in the South after the abolition of slavery). As citizens, workers presumably enjoyed the rights of all "free men" to compete in the marketplace in order to sell their labor to the highest bidder. Radical Republicans held that the "free-labor" system regulated itself through natural laws. Ideally, the government had no business regulating the labor market, setting minimum wages or maximum hours. Radical Republicans such as Nathaniel Banks could make an exception for federal workers, who were granted the eight-hour day in 1869, but most could not accept a legal limit to the working day for wage earners in the free market.

Labor radicals struck at the heart of the Radical Republicans' ideology when they demanded the eight-hour day. George McNeill, who served as president of the Boston Eight-Hour League from 1869 to 1874, argued that employees had no freedom to sell their labor to employers. As deputy director of the Bureau of Labor Statistics, McNeill helped to document the effects of child labor and unemployment in depressing wage levels for the Massachusetts labor market. Freedom of contract might be meaningful to capitalists, but it was not for most workers. "An empty stomach can make no contracts," McNeill declared, reflecting on his youth in Amesbury woolen mills. Workers could assent to a contract to work a certain number of hours for what the employer called a "fair day's pay," but "they do not consent; they submit but do not agree to the rate of wages paid in the labor system." As McNeill wrote later in *The Labor Movement: The Problem of Today*:

> Under the wage-system, no congregated form of labor is conducted on the theory of freedom of contract. At a recent hearing before a legislative body, the treasurer of a large manufactory was asked if he ever consulted with his help in reference to the matter of wages. His answer was, "Do you suppose I run my establishment on the town-meeting plan?" In other words, he confessed, as all employers confess, that they do not propose to allow any freedom of contract as between them and their employees. The contract, so-called, is an agreement that the employer or corporation shall name all of the conditions to the bargain.

Manufacturers were nearly unanimous in their opposition to the new demand for the eight-hour day. In a special report compiled by the Massachusetts House in 1866, employers testified that their workers preferred to work as long as possible in order to earn more money. In other words, they adopted the view that the worker, like the capitalist, was an "economic man," concerned solely with making more money. Others expressed the paternalistic view that "too much leisure was a detriment to his [the worker's] welfare." Another employer added, "Licentiousness, gluttony, drunkenness, exposure, bad habitations, noisey and turbulent homes will wear men out in half the time that steady labor in mills at the usual hours of work will." Another boss commented that this would apply "especially . . . to the foreign element, most of whom are under the control of forces which do

not encourage liberal education and general improvement." Another master held himself up to his workers for emulation: "I have worked 11, 12, 14 and 15 hours a day, and have as yet had no bad effects from it, but rather have been strengthened. . . . It is not the hours of work per day that a person works that breaks him down, but the hours spent in dissipation. . . . By reducing the time for a day's work, and increasing the pay, the employees have been less faithful, ever casting a longing eye on the sun."

Ira Steward, an articulate labor reformer, headed the Grand Eight Hour League and its successor, the Boston Eight Hour League. Steward founded the Boston Eight Hour League along with George McNeill and E. H. Rogers, another labor reformer. A self-educated machinist, Steward became an eight-hour-day advocate in 1850 while working as an apprentice to a machinist for twelve hours a day. Steward was discharged from his job because he agitated for shorter working days. In 1863 a national convention of machinists endorsed Steward's resolution to demand a legal working day of eight hours. Later in that year Steward organized in Boston the Workingman's Convention, the nation's first independent eight-hour organization. He held that organization together until it merged with the Boston Eight Hour League, which then took up the banner for the eight-hour day.

Steward revolutionized the theory for a shorter working day. Striking at the wage-fund theory—the heart of classical economic thought— Steward argued that wages were not regulated exclusively by laws of supply and demand or set by a wage fund created by capitalists. In brief, the wage-fund theory maintained that labor and capital jointly create wealth and that capitalists set a portion of this wealth aside in a special wage fund to hire workers and to pay wages. Although workers create wealth with capitalists, workers do not control it, because labor is regarded in the wage-fund theory as a commodity in the marketplace whose market price (rate of wages) is determined by competition among workers for the available jobs.

The wage-fund theory had been the basis of the ten-hour movement in the 1850s. By restricting the available supply of labor and by demanding shorter work hours, ten-hour advocates believed that they could increase wages. The belief in a supply-and-demand ratio had important consequences for unions: that is, unions did not regard themselves as representatives of a distinct class with fundamentally different interests from employers. Rather both workers and employers drew a share of wealth out of a common fund, which was supported by joint efforts.

Steward, on the other hand, argued that the wage-fund theory reflected "the poverty of the poor, and the power and comparative independence of the wealthy." When work was slack, workers were compelled by their poverty to demand work at any price. When trade was active, the employers brought in "pauperized labor" from Europe and Asia to regulate the labor supply in the interest of capital. The law of supply and demand did not regulate the wages in a supposedly free market, Steward argued. Rather, the expectations that workers brought into the workplace—their tastes, customs, and desires—influenced the amount of pay that they would demand for their labor. "Men who labor excessively are robbed of all ambition to ask for anything more than will satisfy their bodily necessities, while those who labor moderately have time to cultivate tastes and create wants in addition to mere physical comforts," Steward wrote.

The radical cornerstone of Steward's theory was the primary opposition between labor and capital, which the wage-fund theory had previously obscured. Labor should not seek a portion of an abstract fund set aside by capitalists; it should demand its share of the wealth, income and profit.

Discarding the wage-fund theory, Steward argued that workers demand a larger share of the income and profit which their labor had produced by working only eight hours a day. Steward regarded a legal working day of eight hours as a frontal assault on the wage-labor system. If it were illegal for employers to demand more than eight hours of labor per day from workers, Steward reasoned, then wage earners would have advantages in the marketplace. First, workers, carrying the customs and traditions of their trades into the

marketplace, could demand appropriate remuneration for eight hours' work, whereas in the 1860s they had to bargain on the basis of a ten-hour day. Second, if the eight-hour day were the legal working day, workers would have the power of the law behind them in negotiating for overtime. In "The Meaning of the Eight Hour Movement," Steward wrote:

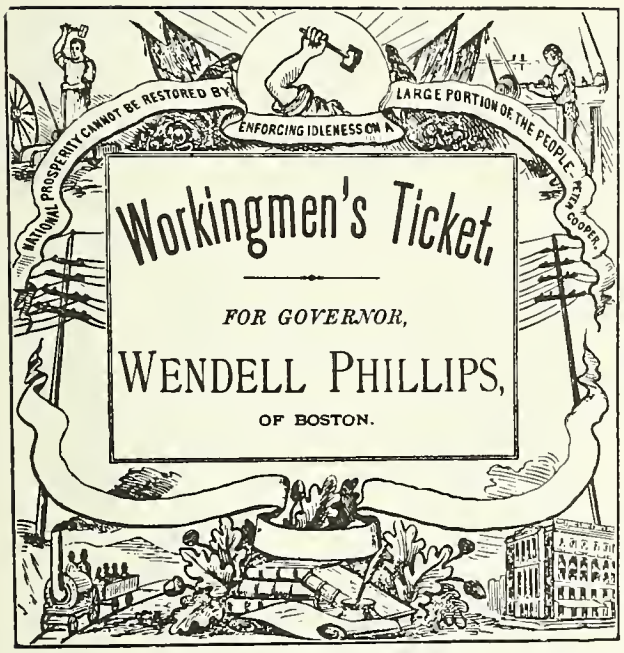
> The Wages we receive, under the present system, are not a just equivalent for our Labor. . . . The Eight Hour system *may* gradually reduce the profits or the "Wages" of the employers; but are not *our* Wages or "profits" reduced, now and then, when we work by the job or piece? From time to time Employers decide that *we* are making too much money. We have decided that *they* are making too much money!
> *They* cut down *our* prices!
> *We shall cut down their Hours!*

The alliance between labor reformers and Radical Republicans did not withstand Steward's assault on economic inequality. Radical Republicans were political radicals when they attempted to impose free labor in the reconstructed South, but they were not economic radicals where free labor already existed. In the North, Radical Republicans opposed the eight-hour working day. E. L. Godkin, editor of the *Nation* and a Radical Republican ideologue, wrote, "When a man agrees to sell his labor, he agrees by implication to surrender his moral and social independence." Godkin did not emphasize morality, but rather the sanctity and inflexibility of the marketplace, which functioned independently of political intervention.

Workers, encountering speedup in the workplace, industrial accidents, and a higher cost of living, were unwilling to abide by "natural" economic laws. In 1870, the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics surveyed a sample of workers and found only one opposed to the shorter workday—a woman who thought it would mean a reduction in pay. Many workers who favored shorter hours argued that this reform would spread the work and reduce industrial accidents. An eight-hour work day would increase productivity, too. As one woman piece-worker told the Bureau, "The last hour [of the ten-hour day] is a very tedious drag; makes more bad work than any other hour, and is of little use to anybody."

Steward and George McNeill of the Boston Eight Hour League drew upon workers' discontent in organizing an important protest movement. In 1870, Steward resigned from the Republican party. He lambasted Radical Republican Senator Wilson, who had gained votes by claiming to support labor demands. "You have proved," Steward wrote Wilson, "that your claim 'to be a real friend of labor' means no more than the old claim of John C. Calhoun and Jefferson Davis that they were the 'real' friends of the Negro."

Wendell Phillips, abolitionist turned labor reformer
Source: Boston Public Library



Campaign poster for the 1870 campaign on behalf of the eight-hour day

Increasing discontent with the Republicans, including the Radicals, and with the Democrats, who claimed to represent the working man, led to another independent labor party campaign in 1870. This time Wendell Phillips, who shared Ira Steward's disenchantment with the Radical Republicans, agreed to become the standard-bearer for the workingmen's party. The National Labor Union, the first of its kind, was formed in 1866 to gain the eight-hour day by forming a national labor party. The NLU supported Phillips' candidacy, but it lacked influence in Massachusetts. Phillips was not discouraged by his poor showing in the 1870 campaign. As he told the Labor Reform convention a year later:

> You do not kill a hundred millions of corporate capital . . . by any one election. The capitalists of Massachusetts are neither fools nor cowards; and you will have to whip them three times, and bury them under a monument weightier than Bunker Hill, before they will believe they are whipped. Now . . . the inference from that statement is this: The first duty resting on this convention, which rises above all candidates and all platforms, is, that it should keep the Labor party religiously together.

Like the first Boston workingmen's party of 1830, that of 1870 could not buck the two-party system or the notorious spoils system, which allowed both parties to win or buy working-class votes with patronage. As David Montgomery notes, many Massachusetts labor reformers responded to the lure of office presented by the established parties. Few followed the independent role adopted by radicals like Ira Steward and Wendell Phillips. "Thus Edward Rogers [a founder of the Boston Eight Hour League] attached himself to the rising Republican Party and won a seat in the Massachusetts legislature as the candidate of his fellow [Charlestown] shipyard workmen. . . . Rogers was returned to the legislature in the 1867 elections, and afterward remained staunchly loyal to his party." In 1869 he turned against his old comrades and wrote a pamphlet opposing the new Labor Reform party. By this time, Montgomery observes, Rogers was mainly concerned about his career.

In 1872, on the eve of a great depression that would destroy most working-class organizations, the Boston Eight Hour League met and endorsed several radical resolutions. The resulting statement, undoubtedly authored by Resolutions Committee Chairman Ira Steward, reflected the labor radicals' bitterness toward the Republicans who supported Reconstruction in the South, but also supported the manufacturing class in the North by opposing shorter-hours bills. In fact, the "lords of the loom" who thrived upon wage slavery in their factories were no better, despite their rhetoric about free labor, than the "lords of the lash" who thrived upon chattel slavery. It was a strong statement:

> *Resolved*, That the factory system of Massachusetts that employs tens of thousands of women and children eleven and twelve hours a day; that owns or controls in its own selfish interest the pulpit and the press; that prevents the operative

> classes from making themselves felt in behalf of less hours, through a remorseless exercise of the power of discharge; that is rearing a population of children and youth whose sickly appearance and scanty or utterly neglected schooling, means a class dangerous to the peace and good order of the State, is proving, year by year, that "the lords of the loom and the lords of the lash" were natural allies in the conflict between Freedom and Slavery; and that those who voted against ten hours legislation in the Massachusetts Legislature would have voted for slavery at the behest of their masters, the cotton lords, as they have voted that this barbarism shall continue to the scandal and shame of the Commonwealth.

Ironically, the Massachusetts legislature passed the ten-hour law for women and children in manufacturing in 1874, *after* the labor movement had begun to decline. In part this pioneering factory law reflected the momentum already developed through decades of struggle for the shorter working day; it also represented the paternalistic response of legislators to the well-documented horrors of female and child labor. The state would grant protection to defenseless women and children, who could not fend for themselves in the labor market. When workers launched aggressive action, including strikes, for the eight-hour day in 1866 and 1867, the legislature replied that laws regulating the labor of adult males would violate freedom of contract. In any case, manufacturers easily evaded the 1874 law by forcing women and children to work through mealtimes, despite the General Court's efforts to add enforcement amendments to the statute. Carroll Wright, who carried on McNeill's work in the Bureau of Labor Statistics, published a report, "The Working Girls of Boston," in 1884 that documented violations of the law:

> In the busy season, in addition to 'store' hours, girls very frequently carry their work home and labor until nine, ten and eleven o'clock, and sometimes after midnight; others are employed every night at places of their employment. . . . In the clothing trades, when busy, girls are often given so much work to do in a stated time, and after working the regular hours are obliged to take work home to complete it on time.

When prosperity returned in the mid 1880s, the Knights of Labor grew dramatically as a national industrial union; it claimed seven hundred thousand members in 1886, the labor movement's most tumultuous year. By early March of 1886 the Knights had organized ten thousand workers in the greater Boston area, making the Hub its banner city. In addition, fifteen thousand other workers belonged to independent trade unions, some of them affiliated with the new American Federation of Labor, which was founded in 1886 by Samuel Gompers and Frank Foster, a prominent Knight who had headed the order's powerful District 30 in eastern Massachusetts. Mass strikes swept the country in 1886 from the southwestern railroads to the midwestern machine shops. Boston's workers made waves noticeable across the land in this troubled year: the city witnessed eleven major strikes, idling 495 establishments for a remarkable 10,746 days in total. In the previous four years only eighteen strikes had hit fifty-nine employers, costing them 1,060 days of labor.

In 1884, a rather insignificant national organization of trade unions passed a bold resolution that "eight hours shall constitute a legal day's work from and after May 1, 1886." As Norman Ware wrote in *The Labor Movement in the United States, 1860-1895*: "By a stroke of fortune, a resolution passed in the dull times of 1884 reached fruition in the revolutionary year of 1886 and became a rallying point and a battle cry for the more aggressive forces of that year." Although Terence Powderly and other national leaders of the Knights opposed the May Day strike, rank-and-file workers expressed growing support for the action. "Local Knights of Labor organizers, over protest of the national organization, established new local assemblies around the eight hour issue," writes Jeremy Brecher in *Strike!* "The Knights of Labor Secretary for the Boston District Assembly reported on April 19th, 1886, that the Order had more than trebled in the previous three months, and that . . . there were four times as many members as thirteen weeks before." A mass eight-hour

Workingmen parading for the eight-hour day in the 1880s

meeting at Faneuil Hall the same month passed the following resolution, reflecting the workers' growing militancy and class consciousness: "This is the workingman's hour, and affrighted capital begins to understand that labor has rights which it is bound to respect—giving people promise that the hour is at hand when the producer of wealth shall claim his own, and freely share in the gains and honors of advanced civilization."

The official opposition of the Knights toward the May Day strike hurt the effort in Boston, and fewer than five thousand joined in the political walkout. As *John Swinton's Paper* reported, "Although there has been a great deal of agitation,

discussion and argument in this city for the last seven months over the adoption of the eight-hour day [in fact one hundred meetings took place before May Day], yet . . . only four trades struck for the proposed change . . . the carpenters, plumbers, painters and masons." In fact, the Central Labor Union, composed mainly of the building trades outside the Knights, acted as the organizing agent for the eight-hour-day strike. "Overwork and machinery combine to increase the army of the unemployed," one CLU circular declared. "Every unemployed man is an obstacle to our common advancement. An army of unemployed men is an army of obstacles. To remove them, they must be employed by reducing the hours of labor. Let's Act."

And act they did, but without the support of the newly organized Knights of Labor, which maintained Ira Steward's original strategy of winning the eight-hour day through legislative enactment. According to Steward, "it was necessary only to adopt a universal eight hour law which would compel the low-standard laborer . . . to demand the same daily pay for eight hours" that the employer offered for ten or more hours. As the famous labor economist John R. Commons wrote, "this compulsory reduction of hours" would increase the workers' wants, creating still greater wage demands which employers would be able to pay as a result of increased productivity through machinery.

In fact, Steward—who died just three years before the May Day strike of 1886—predicted that ultimately the workers' "rising standards of living would take both interest and profit away from the capitalist and thus gradually introduce the cooperative commonwealth," a society that would come through nonviolent reforms. George McNeill preached about the coming of the cooperative commonwealth in his campaign for the Boston mayoralty on the United Labor party ticket in 1886. Indeed, as Professor Commons remarked, Steward's strategy placed surprising faith in the democratic process and therefore opposed trade-union strike action as the policy of a desperate minority rather than a confident majority. But as the Knights of Labor declined rapidly after 1886, the ideal of a cooperative commonwealth based on the nonviolent achievement of the eight-hour day also declined.* Socialistic trade unionists who split from the Knights to form the American Federation of Labor believed in strikes and other forms of direct action to win the cooperative commonwealth. Samuel Gompers, Adolph Strasser of the cigar makers, and Henry Abrahams, their Boston comrade, along with other AFL founders such as Peter J. McGuire of the carpenters, all believed in the class struggle. Unlike the leaders of the Knights, the men who led this new federation had no aversion to striking for either higher wages or shorter hours.

In 1889, socialists founded the Second International to take up the fallen gauntlet of Marx's First International, which had briefly allied with the Eight Hour Leagues of Ira Steward and George McNeill in the 1870s. The new International declared May Day, 1890, the date for transatlantic demonstrations for the eight-hour day. Honoring the U.S. workers who struck for the same goal on the same date in 1886, the socialists established May Day as an international workers' holiday, and on the first of May, 1890, wage earners marched in huge demonstrations for the eight-hour day in European and American cities. "The proletariat of Europe and America is holding a revue of its forces," wrote Friedrich Engels; "it is mobilized for the first time as one army under one flag, and fighting for one immediate aim: an eight hour working day, established by legal enactment. . . . If only Marx were with me to see it with his own eyes."

Boston workers—who could legitimately claim to be pioneers of the crusade for the shorter working day—massed on May Day of 1890 largely behind the banners of the AFL building trades. In the next few years, a period of relative prosperity and large-scale construction, the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners, led by the Irish socialist Peter

*Those who maintained a vision of a cooperative society achieved without class conflict were found largely among the middle-class followers of Edward Bellamy, whose fantastically popular utopian novel, *Looking Backward*, was published in 1887. Bellamy's vision of Boston in the year 2000 with its regimented apprenticeship program did not appeal as much to workers.

Peter J. McGuire, socialist president of the carpenters' union during successful strikes for the eight-hour day in 1890

J. McGuire, conducted strikes that won the eight-hour day for 46,200 building workers in 137 cities, including Boston. Massachusetts state and municipal workers won the nine-hour day in 1891. In 1892, the General Court, responding to labor's renewed militancy, passed a fifty-eight-hour limit on the work week of women and children at the urging of the AFL and Democratic Governor Billy Russell. The governor campaigned for reelection partly on the basis of his support for the bill, and the labor vote helped him win a second term.

Josiah Quincy IV, the grandson of Boston's second mayor, who was reputedly defeated by the labor vote, emerged in the legislature as a liberal Democratic labor reformer in the 1880s. Like previous reform politicians Ben Butler, Nathaniel Banks, Henry Wilson, and Charles Sumner, young Quincy won labor support as an advocate of shorter hours. For example, in 1887, as state representative, Quincy sponsored a number of popular reform bills, notably a law protecting the mealtimes of women and children workers—who were frequently working more than ten hours a day, despite the 1874 legislation establishing the sixty-hour week for these workers. When the terrible depression of 1893-1894 caused violent demonstrations of the unemployed as well as mass working-class discontent with the Democratic party, a number of rival Irish ward bosses united around Josiah Quincy's mayoral candidacy in 1895. (One of these bosses, John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, who represented the North End in the legislature, also responded to the discontent of the depression by pushing for an eight-hour day for city workers.) Quincy won the mayoral election over his Republican opponent and Frank Parsons, the radical economist who ran on a platform of municipal socialism.

Josiah Quincy IV, last of the Yankee Democrats in Boston and reform mayor in the 1890s
Source: Boston Public Library

Ironically, when Josiah Quincy took office in city hall his reforms earned him a reputation as something of a municipal socialist. The Marxist workers in the Socialist Labor party mocked Quincy's "gas and water socialism" and proposals for public baths, but these reforms won working-class votes back to the Democratic party. Mayor Quincy responded directly to labor union demands by directing city departments to hire organized labor for specific projects. He also created electrical and building-repair divisions in the Public Works Department, and staffed them with union labor. In 1897 Quincy won national attention by establishing a municipally owned printing plant, filled with union typographers who enjoyed paid holidays and, most importantly, the eight-hour day, which was still very rare outside of the building trades. These actions alienated Quincy from his own class of people—who were frightened by the turbulence of the 1890s.

The machine politicians, led by Patrick "Peajacket" Maguire (who will be described in Chapter 5), supported Quincy's labor reforms because of their political popularity, but they had no use for experiments in municipal socialism. As historian Geoffrey Blodgett writes in *The Gentle Reformers*, the Catholic church's "historic reluctance" to approve "drastic changes in temporal life gave the Irish politicians as sturdy a rationale for social conservatism" as the "legal tradition" of property rights and freedom of contract gave Yankee politicians. "Prosperous, self-made men, the Irish leaders had little sympathy for the radicalism many an Irish laborer absorbed from the Knights of Labor in the eighties," Blodgett remarks. "They hated the red flag both as Catholics and as lawyers, realtors, and politicians." After the impressive May Day demonstrations of 1890, Boston's Irish boss Pat Maguire warned the readers of his newspaper that labor would "forfeit public confidence and come to grief" if it allowed "itself to be directed or managed by the crowd of reckless socialists and atheists who are trying to use the grievances of wage-workers as a lever to undermine the foundations of civil government."

Maguire and Boston's Irish bosses not only opposed the radical labor movement advocated by Knights of Labor such as George McNeill; they also opposed independent labor parties, not to mention socialist parties. The ward politicians wanted government to be personalized, not collectivized or democratized; they wanted the workers to be dependent upon them for jobs and favors. As we shall see in Chapter 5, the bosses of Maguire's stripe won out over the radicals of McNeill's stripe, and gradually sapped Boston's labor movement of its militancy and independence.

Boston's workers placed a great deal of faith in politicians, and held naive expectations of what the legislature would do for them. For example, an eight-hour bill for public employees passed the General Court in 1906, but according to the official history of the State Federation of Labor (which used its growing strength to lobby for the law), the bill was "weakened by amendments." In 1909, the General Court passed a strengthened eight-hour bill only to have Governor Draper veto the act. As a result of this frustration, a minority favored the creation of a labor party in the commonwealth, but for reasons explained in Chapter 4, Boston workers remained firmly attached to the Democratic party.

Many workers still labored ten or more hours a day in 1900, but we should not forget the accomplishments of the Boston movement for the shorter workday, first in earning the ten-hour day for skilled workers, then for women and children, and finally in gaining the eight-hour day for federal and city workers as well as some craftsmen. These accomplishments, coming through the agitation and organization of working people, struck at the heart of laissez-faire capitalism. It would not be an exaggeration to say, as Karl Marx did in *Capital:* "The creation of the normal working day is . . . the product of protracted civil war . . . between the capitalist class and the working class." Marx was describing the struggle for the humane working day in England, and his analysis is true for the United States as well as for Boston in particular.

3

The Making of the Irish Working Class

Immigration played the crucial role in shaping the labor and social history of Boston. Successive waves of immigrants came to Boston throughout the nineteenth century in search of a better life; they all contributed to the city's growth and development. Each group brought a set of customs and traditions, the old country ways that conflicted with the demands of life and labor in the commercial city. Like the immigrants who followed, the Irish retained aspects of the old culture as they transformed themselves from peasants to proletarians. The making of Boston's Irish working class was a political and cultural process as well as an economic one.

The enormous Irish influx in the 1840s marked a turning point in the city's social history. The potato famine and blight of 1846 caused many to leave the Emerald Isle; the estimated population of Ireland declined from 8.2 million in 1841 to 6.5 million in 1851. Of the 1.7 million individuals lost by Ireland, census commissioners estimated that 20,000 died of starvation between 1845 and 1850, and that 250,000 perished from fever. Most of the remaining people emigrated to America or England as follows: 250,000 between 1840 and 1845; 300,000 between 1846 and 1847; and over 600,000 between 1848 and 1850.

The rise of agricultural capitalism in Ireland, the consolidation of landholdings, and the forced eviction of the Irish cottagers from their land displaced two million people. Owing to economic shifts after 1815, the British transportation revolution, and a collapse in the grain market, Ireland was more useful to Britain for meat and wool than for grain. British and Anglo-Irish landlords, in turn, evicted as many tenants as possible to convert farmland into grazing land. Armed with the Eviction Act of 1818 and the Subletting Act of 1820, landlords forced tenants off the land and appropriated tenant crops as back rent. Deprived of their means of subsistence and dispossessed of their capital resources, Irish peasants became migrants. In 1838, the Irish Poor Law offered them the alternatives of giving up what little land they had and working in a state workhouse, or holding on to their land and starving.

"To an Englishman journeying westward across Ireland," wrote C. Poulett Scrope in 1849, "it almost seems that he is retrograding from an age of science and civilization to one of ignorance and barbarism." The Devon Commission reported that:

> The agricultural labourer of Ireland continues to suffer the greatest privations and hardships; he continues to depend upon casual and precarious employment for subsistence; he is still badly housed, badly fed, badly clothed, and badly paid for his labor. We cannot forbear expressing our strong sense of the patient endurance which the labouring classes have generally exhibited under sufferings greater, we believe, than the people of any other country in Europe have to sustain.

Peasant farms degenerated into rundale, that is, scattered potato patches, sown in lazy-beds or furrows. Because patches were not fenced off from one another, quarrels inevitably occurred about ownership and care. By the mid 1820s, increasingly larger peasant families were caught between need for food and a finite amount of land. To increase potato crop yields, they substituted coarse, watery potatoes, which were called "lumpers" or "horse-potatoes." Because these potatoes were difficult

to digest, they used whiskey as a medicinal tonic to help digestion. Peasants still grew oats, but saved them for rent or for the market; often they starved while sacks of oats sat in cottages for payment of rent.

Peasant housing deteriorated from its ramshackle state to near ruin. The typical country homestead consisted of a hovel-like sod or rough stone cottage. Furnishings included one or two wooden stools, an iron pot, beds with heather or potato mattresses, a chair or two, various tools, and some bedclothes. About half the floor space was reserved for pigs and cattle, but few cottages had partitioned floor space. "Their cottages," wrote Sir Walter Scott of Irish peasant homes, "would scarce serve for pig styes even in Scotland." To exacerbate matters, as many as three families and their animals often shared one dwelling.

To counter these conditions, peasants developed methods of helping one another. They implemented Brehon law, a Gaelic notion that amounted to an unwritten system of informal control, commonly agreed upon and enforced by the community. Peasants formed secret societies, usually known as Ribbonmen or Whiteboys, which forced landlords and middlemen to reduce rents and compelled fellow peasants to sell their labor at the collectively decided rate. Whiteboyism was not gang adventurism, but the deliberate association of peasants to protect themselves from landlord greed. "If every labourer in Ireland could earn eightpence a day for 310 days in the year," commented Sir George D. Lewis, "we should probably never hear of Whiteboy disturbances. It is the impossiblity of living by wages which throws him upon the land; it is the liability of being driven from the land and the consciousness of having no other recourse that makes him a Whiteboy."

Because Whiteboys and Ribbonmen were powerless against British troops and colonial law, they used terror to attain control over Ireland's agricultural resources, to protect fellow peasants against exorbitant rents, and to impede evictions. "The objects of Ribbonmen," noted an Irish landlord in 1821, were "first to compel the landlords and middlemen to reduce their nominal rents; secondly to compel the farmers and others not to pay more than certain fixed rents; thirdly to compel farmers and others not to pay less than certain wages; and fourthly to compel the labourers not to receive less than certain wages." In *Irish Disturbances,* Sir G. D. Lewis suggests that:

> The Whiteboy Association—which included Rightboys, Threshers, Whitefeet, Blackfeet, Terry Alts, Captain Rock's men, etc.—may be considered as a vast trade union for the protection of the Irish peasantry; the object being, not to regulate the rate of wages or the hours of work, but to keep the actual occupant in possession of his land, and in general to regulate the relations of landlord and tenant for the benefit of the latter. Certain other objects are occasionally added, the chief of which is to prevent the employment of a stranger, the quantity of work being in the opinion of the labourers already insufficient.

Uprooted from their homes by agricultural capitalism, the Irish came to Boston only to confront commercial and industrial capitalism. The uprooted did not enter this confrontation without resources. The collective political traditions born of the land struggle and the cultural traditions of oppressed Catholicism stayed alive in the Irish ghettos of Boston.

As the commonwealth's chief seaport, Boston received the majority of immigrants, who were coming to New England. Nearly 100,000 Irish immigrants arrived between 1846 and 1849—15,500 in 1846, 25,250 in 1847, 25,000 in 1848, and 34,900 in 1849. Over nine tenths of these people sailed the shipping route from Liverpool, where many earned money as casual laborers to pay their passage to America. From 1840 to 1850, Irish immigrants swelled Boston's population by 105 percent, from 65,000 to 139,000, and from 1850 to 1855 by 17 percent, to 161,429. Between 1830 and 1850, the percentage of foreign-born in the Hub increased dramatically, from 5.7 percent to 45.7 percent, and by 1855 foreigners comprised a majority (53 percent).

Boston's capitalists benefited materially from a new supply of workers. In 1850, fifteen Boston families controlled 20 percent of the cotton spin-

"The Coming of the Irish"—a contemporary sketch

dles in the United States and 30 percent of the railroad mileage, 39 percent of the insurance assets, and 40 percent of the banking revenues in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. With substantial investments in textile mills throughout New England, this Brahmin elite welcomed a cheap labor force, which facilitated growth and retarded wage increases. "There seems to be an increased disposition to employ them [Irish immigrants] in these factories, and in some places it is thought that the factories can hardly be carried on without them," reported the 1850 Boston *Census*.

Because Boston was a water-locked city, requiring people to pay tolls or fares to get from one point to another, most of the poor lived close to their places of work. The Irish clustered in cheap housing around the wharves and commercial streets of Boston, forming two Irish ghettos in the North End and the Fort Hill-South Cove area. "New coming Irishmen, nostalgic for the Emerald Isle, gravitated towards these vicinities, augmenting the Irish already there, and making their countrymen reluctant to leave th[is] homelike community," Oscar Handlin writes in *Boston's Immigrants*. As the Irish came to the North End and Fort Hill, the resident groups quickly fled, "sacrificing other interests in order to avoid the decline in social status that resulted from remaining."

Living conditions in these ghettos were wretched. Old houses and warehouses were divided to make tenements. In addition, the lots of houses, once inhabited by the bourgeoisie, were filled with frame dwellings that crowded conditions. Once the home of prosperous merchants and self-sufficient artisans, the North End deteriorated into makeshift flats and polluted alleys. Houses "long inhabited by the well-to-do class of people," a contemporary observer noted, "are vacated by them for others in more fashionable quarters . . . and then a less fortunate class of folk occupy for a

while, they, in their turn, make room for another class on the descending scale . . . till houses, once fashionable . . . become neglected, dreary tenement houses into which the low paid and poverty smitten . . . crowd by the dozens."

The Irish were prime victims of landlord exploitation. "We cannot doubt," a citizens' committee wrote, "that a very large portion of day laborers would pay almost any rents near their work rather than move, . . . the *bulk* of day laborers will, at all events, cluster as near their work as they can." Slum landlords received exorbitant rents; in Fort Hill, for example, immigrants paid $1.00 to $1.50 per week for one room, compared with similar rents for commodious apartments in Boston's West End. Landlords received advance payments of $1.50 and $2.00 per week for attics and cellars respectively.

Congregating in the North End, the Irish by 1855 comprised 10,700 of the seventh ward's 17,000 residents. Of the 168 residents of Batterymarch Street, for example, 146 were of Irish nativity; 673 of Pearl Street's 941 residents were Ireland-born. The 3,441 families living in the North End crowded into 1,000 three-story dwellings. With an average of three families to each one-family dwelling, the North End was the most densely populated section of Boston. Reporting on Irish tenement living conditions, the Committee for Internal Health reported that tenements were not "occupied by a single family, or even by two or three families, but each room, from garret to cellar [was] . . . filled with a family of several persons, and sometimes with two or more [families]."

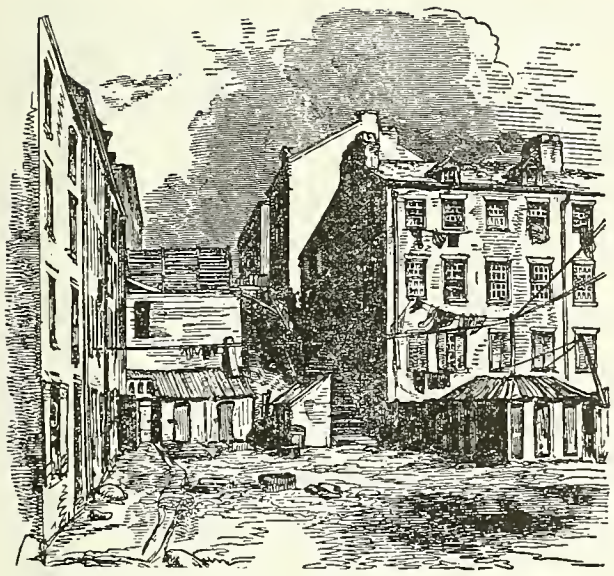
Irish immigrants took cellar dwellings, which enjoyed the advantage of coolness in the summer but suffered from lack of ventilation and light. Lemuel Shattuck, chairman of the 1850 Sanitation Commission, reported that the typical cellar home had a washbasin in the living room-kitchen area, a bedroom, and a third room, which accommodated additional residents. More often than not, water seeped through floor planks, forcing residents to bail water that had accumulated during the evening out of their cellars each morning. In *Hygiene in Massachusetts,* a report published in 1850, Dr. C. E. Buckingham recalled that he had seen tidewater "pouring into the back yard[s] [of tenements] from all sides to the depth of a foot." Irish cellar tenants had to "sail around their kitchens in pursuit of their dinners and to coast along the shores of their cellars in tubs for their winter's wood." Dr. Henry Clark struck a more somber note in his report to the Committee of Internal Health, writing that "one cellar was reported by the police to be occupied nightly as a sleeping apartment for thirty-nine people. In another, the tide had risen so high that it was necessary to approach the bedside of a patient by means of a plank which was laid from one stool to another; while the dead body of an infant was actually sailing about in its coffin."

Sanitation was a problem in Irish slum areas. Half-Moon Place, a semicircular group of dwellings set into the side of Fort Hill, accessible by two alleys and a stairway, typified the worst of immigrant living conditions. The *Internal Health Report* notes:

> To the right of "Jacob's Ladder" is a cluster of six privies situated nearly in the center of the place. At the time of the [cholera] epidemic these were greatly out of repair and the ground about them was covered with their overflowing contents, removed only by evaporation. At the foot of the drain are two clusters of privies, six in number. The open space likewise presents three cess-pools intended to carry off dirty water; but they were choked with all sorts of vegetable matters, as fragments of cabbages and potatoes. . . . As these accumulated, they were scooped up and thrown upon the ground which was thus plentifully bestrewn with putrefying vegetable matters. With these were mingled no small proportion of substances still more loathsome.

Since the area was a private way, owned by slum landlords, the city did not enforce such legal preventative sanitary regulations as wider streets and larger sewers.

Because of such unsanitary living conditions, Irish immigrants were susceptible to diseases such as cholera, typhus, and dysentery. The approximate nature of antebellum health statistics leaves unresolved Theodore Parker's statement that "the



Irish slum dwellings

mortality rate among the poor in Boston is higher than any city in Europe." However, contemporary statistics do indicate that the Unitarian divine was not exaggerating when he said that "gray headed Irishmen we seldom see." In accounting for Boston's high mortality rate, Josiah Curtis wrote:

> No one will be surprised by these facts [mortality statistics], who will take the trouble to visit the abodes, many of them cellars, and nearly all crowded with a dying mass of human beings, which occupy the low land, much of it redeemed from the water, that lies in the northerly, easterly, southerly sections, and suburbs of Boston. They are equal to anything we have been able to discover in European cities. Probably not one in a thousand of our more favored citizens have any correct idea of the low, dark, damp habitations grouped in badly drained and almost unscavenged [sic] neighborhoods, where thousands, and we think we might say tens of thousands of our population dwell, amidst all the impurities of a polluted atmosphere, and personal uncleanliness. These are hotbeds of typhus, dysentery, and other epidemics as well as diseases peculiar to children. The various exhalations of the human body, particularly in an overcrowded apartment, are ranked among the most deadly poisons known. It acts insidiously but with fatal certainty. This condition, especially when connected with a scanty supply of nourishing food, begets struma which ripens the system for an attack of struma or any of the more severe epidemics in the adult, and cholera infantum, marasmus, and convulsions in children.

From 1840 to 1850, Sanitation Commissioner Lemuel Shattuck set the death rate at 2.53 per hundred individuals, or one in every thirty-nine Boston residents. During the same period the city registrar set the death rate at 3.84, or one in every twenty-six Boston residents. Massachusetts mortality, on the other hand, was one in every sixty-seven persons. Cholera accounted for the high Boston death rate, and most cases developed in Irish neighborhoods. In 1849, 460, or 60 percent, of the 707 cholera victims in Boston were born in Ireland. Irish immigrant births exceeded Irish immigrant deaths by nineteen in 1849. From 1850 to 1855, Bostonians died at a rate of 2.2 per hundred; immigrants died at a rate of 3.1 per hundred—a rate which census takers deemed "more favorable than the real truth" because it did not include the immigrants who died in 1855. The Irish community along Ann, Commercial, Fleet, Moon, and lower Hanover streets, "the most fatal section of the city," according to Josiah Curtis, had a mortality rate of 3.0, which compares with mortality rates of 1.4 in Boston's sixth ward, where many of Boston's blacks lived, and 1.8 in wards nine and ten, the residential areas south of the financial district.

Desperate poverty in the Irish ghetto led to crimes against people and property. In a city where temperance reformers were active, Irish alcoholism led to frequent arrests for drunkenness and rowdiness by the Yankee police force. Like most nineteenth-century professionals, the head of Boston's growing police department believed that alcoholism caused poverty, not vice versa. "It is an admitted fact," testified Chief Coburn, "that intemperance is the direct origin of more poverty,

more crime, and more human suffering than all other causes combined." As historian Roger Lane notes in *Policing the City: Boston, 1822-1885*, "Only those who read the statistics of health, or who had reason to visit the city's Irish slums, were fully aware of the misery in Boston. But all who walked in the streets could see its public face, and it was easy to use drunkenness as the index to it."

Despite the degradations of poverty and disease, Irish immigrants managed to survive and to create a community. The Catholic church was, of course, the most important institution in their lives; it not only dispensed charity and guidance, but its priests offered the reassuring promise that life would be better in the next world. Although the church's conservative message was a powerful one, it did not necessarily guide the actions of all Catholic workers. Many Irishmen joined Irish fraternal and national groups, and later secret trade unions, which the church opposed.

The Catholic church was not a monolithic power in nineteenth-century Boston; rather, it was a mosaic of parishes in poor districts, that belonged to the people as well as their priests. The church in Europe represented successively the interests of the nobility, the aristocracy, and the bourgeoisie, but the church in America was composed largely of working-class people. As E. P. Thompson points out in his brilliant study, *The Making of the English Working Class*, the "Irish priesthood was poorer and closer to the peasantry than any in Europe. . . . [I]n a literal sense they lived off their flocks, taking their meals in the homes of their parishioners and dependent on their goodwill." As the Catholic bishop of Waterford told his clergy, "Do not permit yourselves to be made instruments of the rich of this world, who will try . . . to make instruments of you, for their own temporal purposes. . . . The poor were always your friends—they inflexibly adhered to you, and to their religion, even in the worst times."

Thompson's comments on the Irish immigrants in English cities could certainly be applied to Boston: "Indeed, for many of the migrants the power of the priest increased. Torn up by their roots, the priest was the last point of orientation with their old way of life. Literate but not far removed in social class, free from identification with English employers and authorities, sometimes knowing Gaelic, the priest passed more frequently between England and Ireland, brought news of home and sometimes of relatives, could be intrusted with remittances, savings or messages. Hence it followed that the most enduring cultural tradition which the Irish peasantry brought . . . into England was that of a semi-feudal nationalist Church."

Catholicism loomed larger and larger in the life of Irish immigrants in the United States, but the church was only part of the rich cultural heritage they brought to this country. Like other European peasants they were uprooted, but they were not culturally deprived. Their Celtic heritage remained alive in the slums of Boston and New York. Of special importance was Fenianism, the political culture developed by the Irish republicans who battled British imperialism. Initially, Irish nationalism only caused immigrants trouble with American legal authority and the Catholic hierarchy, but by the time of the Civil War, Irish republicanism and nationalism began to blend nicely with the native American versions of those ideologies, ideologies directed toward the same end—winning freedom from British tyranny.

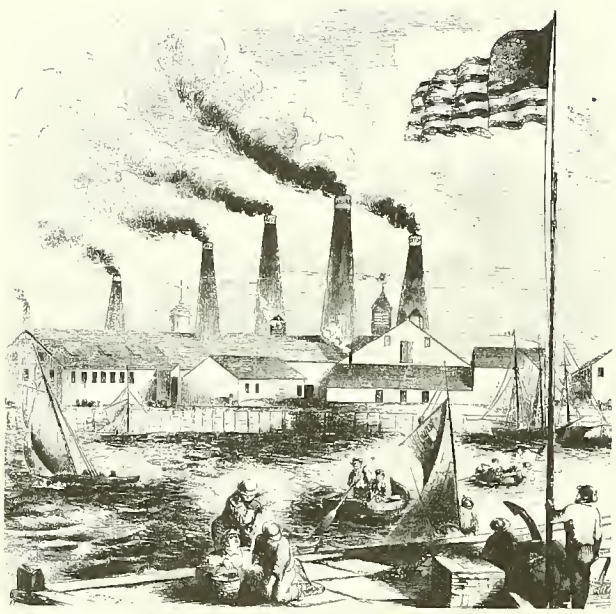
Although it is tempting to think of the Irish immigrants in Boston solely as an ethnic group, it is important to understand that they were overwhelmingly working class. At first, their ethnic and religious identification was paramount, but as these peasants quickly became laborers and factory operatives, class identification played a role in the making of their history. Compared to previous immigrants, the Irish were largely proletarian. They labored as navvies on the railroad construction and the immense Back Bay landfill project of the 1850s and 1860s, as dockworkers and domestics, and as factory operatives in the garment shops, textile mills, and shoe factories throughout the area. Few entered the labor market as skilled workers. Freedom of contract meant little to people who were not free to sell their labor to the highest bidder. In fact, in 1850, 65 percent of the adult Irish population in Boston consisted of unskilled laborers (7,007) or domestics (2,300). Only a few obtained jobs as skilled workmen. For example,

The poor: scavengers in Back Bay
Source: Winslow Homer engraving from *Ballou's Pictorial* (1859)

just 356 Irishmen worked in skilled jobs as carpenters, and most of them were probably from Ulster. And of the thousands of Irish in Boston, only six were listed as police officers in 1850. A handful were professionals, and only eighteen, among the thousands, were merchants. Consequently, Irish immigrants lacked the kind of job control that skills provided for Yankees and earlier immigrants. As Oscar Handlin points out in *Boston's Immigrants*, the Irish were unique because they comprised "a single economic class by industrial stratification."

Irish peasant traditions which Protestants saw negatively as "rum and Romanism" isolated the immigrant workers from the more secular, democratic heritage of Boston's native working class. Unlike the skilled, native workers and many of the British immigrants, the unskilled Irish lacked a sense of craft rights and artisan traditions, which became the vehicles of class-conscious worker protest in early nineteenth-century Boston. As Catholics, they also lacked the libertarian religious background that some Protestant churches imparted to working-class followers. Although parish priests were often sympathetic to the plight of the poor, they were not outspoken critics of the social order like Theodore Parker and William Ellery Channing, two of Boston's dissenting Protestant ministers. The Irish also lacked a familiarity with citizen's rights (or with Tom Paine's revolutionary "Rights of Man"), which had guided the parents of native Massachusetts workers in the revolution against British tyranny. Many Irish immigrants did have a conception of natural rights—based on their militant stands against capitalist landlords—and they did have a tradition of republicanism derived from their own struggle against political tyranny; but these parallels did not become a basis of unity until the Civil War.

Many Irish immigrants brought a practice of secret, militant action that shocked American workers. Although native workers needed no en-



Flint Glass Works, South Boston, 1840s
Source: Boston Public Library

couragement to engage in civil political action, they were averse to taking illegal direct action. The Irish anti-conscription riots in Boston and New York during the Civil War, followed by the Fenian invasion of Canada and the Molly Maguires' armed struggle with company police in the Pennsylvania coal fields, introduced a more violent strain into American labor history. Often this violence resulted from the Irish community's efforts to defend itself against outsiders, as in the 1863 riot against conscription agents in Boston's "Little Ireland."

It took some time before the Irish were integrated into the Boston labor movement. Faced with the threat of Know-Nothing nativism, the Irish clung to the church; lacking political power, they turned to local politicians, the group that Thomas D'Arcy McGee of the Irish-Catholic Boston *Pilot* called a "small fry of demagogues and overseers," who acted as job brokers; shut out of the skilled trades and Yankee craft unions, the Irish formed their own labor organizations. As Oscar Handlin observes in his pioneering book, *Boston's Immigrants*, the Irish "were almost alone" among early nineteenth-century aliens "in founding associations for material benefit," because unlike earlier groups such as the Germans and British, they were confined to the working class. Celtic workers proved their ability to work through trade unions by forming their own organizations; they also showed their willingness to take strike action. For instance, Irish laborers entered Boston's clothing industry while it was being altered by the sewing machine in the 1840s. By 1850, the number of tailors in the city increased to 1,547, as compared to 475 a decade earlier. More than a thousand of these tailors were Irish greenhorns, who worked for lower wages than those that skilled tailors had received before mechanization. After an unsuccessful strike in 1843, Irish immigrant tailors formed a cooperative factory, which failed in 1853. Tailors then founded the Journeymen Trade and Benevolent Association and affiliated with tailors in Philadelphia. "In an attempt to control dock and warehouse employment," Irish longshoremen joined in the Boston Laborers Association, founded in 1846. Although the association "lost a serious strike in 1856," Handlin writes, "it reorganized in 1862 and grew in strength and vitality during the Civil War, remaining distinctly Irish, as did similar societies of waiters and granite cutters."

Irish immigrant workers opposed abolitionism, and followed the church, which opposed total emancipation of slaves. In fact, Boston's free black community was small and did not present much threat to Irish jobs, but the Democratic party had more than its share of racist demagogues who whipped up the fear of competition from black labor. The Catholic Democratic *Pilot* issued this "Practical Lesson to the Working Class" in 1854: "The morals of both rich and poor are much better than they were forty or fifty years ago, and this great change for the better was largely attributed to the introduction and substitution of Irish immigrant laborers and Irish emigrant domestics instead of African laborers and African domestics." A month before the preliminary Emancipation Proclamation in 1862, a Boston *Pilot* editorialist wrote that:

> the negro is indeed unfortunate, and the creature

> has the common rights of humanity living in his breast but, in the country of whites, where the labor of the whites has been everything, but his nothing, and where the whites find it difficult to earn subsistence, what right has the negro either to preference or to equality.

Since the Catholic church made no serious attempt to defuse racial fears among the Irish, Democratic propaganda against free blacks left an ugly legacy of bigotry among the city's poor whites.

The Civil War marked a turning point for workers in Boston. The two groups unified against British support for the Confederacy and around desires to save the Union, which was commonly regarded by workers as the only democracy in the world. Lincoln's war aims originally included the preservation of the Union and no further expansion of slavery into the territories. Since Lincoln did not include the abolition of slavery in the initial war aims, Irish workers in Boston could repress their fear, at least in the short run, of competition from black labor.

After the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, Boston, like New York, witnessed a riot against conscription. In New York, the riot turned from an anticonscription demonstration to an attack on the city's black population. However, in Boston the draft riot was largely a working-class protest, since wealthy boys hired other men to take their places in the Union Army.

The Civil War generated an alliance between Irish nationalists and labor reformers, which pierced the isolation of the immigrant working class. As David Montgomery notes, "By the late sixties increasing numbers of Catholics were emerging from behind the psychological walls of the ghetto to join, and at times even to lead, labor organizations." The Irish nationalist movement was the "battering ram that first breached the walls of ethnic isolation," bringing Irish immigrants into conflict with the church and the Democratic party and, briefly, into an alliance with Yankee labor reformers and the Radical Republicans, who favored drastic "reconstruction" in the South. After the Civil War the Irish, once a conservative obstacle to labor reform in Massachusetts, met revived Protestant workers on common grounds. As Professor Montgomery says in a passage from *Beyond Equality* that applies to Boston: "The confluence of struggles for the preservation of the American Union and for the separation from Britain [led by the Fenian Brotherhood after its founding in 1857] aroused the ardor of America's immigrants from Eiren as had (and could) no other issue, bringing them into conflict with their Church and party leaders here, and making them henceforth contributors, rather than obstacles, to the Radical and labor-reform trends of the decade" from 1862 to 1872. When the Knights and Daughters of St. Crispin held their first anniversary celebration in 1869 for unionized shoe workers from all over eastern Massachusetts, a report from the meeting said that Crispin banners "bearing the flexed arm of a shoemaker's hammer" stood beside "American and Irish flags, typical of the unity of race and feeling on the occasion."

"By the 1880's," Montgomery notes, "the majority of American labor unions would be headed by Catholics of Irish descent." As we explained in the last chapter, the 1880s also saw the beginning of much more aggressive, direct-action tactics on behalf of the eight-hour day and other demands. Boston workers, generally reluctant to strike, took to the streets in unprecedented numbers in 1886 and the years that followed. Perhaps the Irish, with their skepticism about Yankee politics, their traditions of direct action, and their experience of ghetto solidarity, contributed to the making of the nineteenth-century working class by taking the labor movement into the streets.* In this regard, Engels' comments about the effect of the Irish on the English working class may well apply to Boston: he believed that the "passionate, mercurial Irish temperament" helped to push the more reserved, more disciplined English working people into militant forms of political action.

The Fenians were especially strong among urban laborers, many of whom were recruited to the

*The infamous strike of the predominantly Irish Boston police force in 1919 (discussed in Chapter 6) was perhaps the most dramatic example of the Irish influence. Hired to protect Yankee property and traditions of law and order, the Irish police shocked the nation by acting like militant workers.

brotherhood while serving in the Union Army. "The movement was purely nationalistic in ideology and objectives, with scarcely a trace of awareness of 'labor issues,' but its recruits were workingmen and soldiers, and its strength was urban," writes Montgomery. "Thus in the revolutionary history of Ireland it stands as a halfway house between the Liberals of 1848 and the Socialists of 1916." In fact, the nationalism and republicanism of Irish-American workers opened them up to the Radical Republicans, whose nationalism pledged free labor for whites in the North as well as for freed blacks in the South. Fenians also found themselves open to radicalism of the labor movement, specifically the Boston Eight Hour League.

In 1865, the Boston Eight Hour League succeeded in converting General Nathaniel Banks to the eight-hour cause when he ran successfully for the Republican congressional nomination in the city's sixth district. In 1866, the eight-hour leagues sought to depose the conservative Republican congressman, A. H. Rice, who represented the third district, which included parts of South Boston and Roxbury. To oppose Rice, whom the leagues regarded as an "exponent of the views of the moneyed class," a labor caucus met and nominated Wendell Phillips, the noted Boston radical who (unlike William Lloyd Garrison and other abolitionists) championed the causes of urban workers from the early days of antislavery agitation. Phillips inexplicably declined the nomination and the nominating committee, headed by George McNeill, desperately called a new meeting of labor radicals to nominate another candidate. They chose a less famous, but equally impressive, candidate.

General Patrick R. Guiney was born in Tipperary County, Ireland, in 1835. After migrating to New Brunswick, he came to Massachusetts and worked as a machinist in Lawrence. He briefly attended Worcester College (later Holy Cross) and then studied for the bar. He practiced law in Boston and became a prominent Democrat in Roxbury. When the Civil War began, he became a captain in General Thomas F. Meagher's Irish Ninth Massachusetts Brigade. Young Guiney quickly earned

General Patrick R. Guiney, Irish Nationalist and Civil War hero, supporter of the eight-hour movement

battlefield promotions, as Celtic officers died in bloody engagements; after attaining the rank of colonel, he was severely wounded, his left eye shot out in the Virginia wilderness campaign that cost so many lives, notably in the ranks of the Irish Ninth. He "returned to Boston," Montgomery writes, "not only a brevet brigadier general and a war hero, but a convinced Republican who leaned towards the Radicals and was friendly to the Fenians."

Guiney was undoubtedly converted through the influence of his commanding general, one of the few prominent Irish Republicans in the commonwealth. As General Meagher wrote Guiney in 1863 concerning the Irish Catholics' loyalty to the Democratic party, "Democrats they profess themselves to be from the start—the instant the baggage smashers and cut-throat lodging-house-keepers lay their hands on them—and Democrats they remain until the day they die, miserably and repulsively, regardless of the conflicting meanings that name acquires through the progressive workings

of the great world around them." Liberals like Meagher and Guiney were Irish nationalists who wanted to ally with the American nationalists, notably the Radical Republicans, to bring freedom to the southern slaves and the peasants in Ireland. The Democrats—especially the northern "copperheads" who supported the Confederacy—manipulated the Irish vote through demagoguery by playing on the immigrant's fears of Protestant persecution and black job competition. By contrast, the Republicans, especially the Radicals, represented a progressive force working to enhance free labor and national liberty in the North and the South.

When the Republican convention of the third district ignored General Guiney, labor's choice, and picked another businessman to succeed the incumbent, the labor caucus angrily reconvened and nominated the general as a candidate of the independent Workingmen's party. Unlike the GOP nominee, a railroad president, Guiney was radical not only for the South, but for the North as well. Guiney told an enthusiastic meeting of labor reformers, Radical Republicans, and Irish war veterans that he would campaign for both labor reform (notably an eight-hour day for public employees) and suffrage reform in the South. In criticizing Congress for its timid approach to enfranchisement for freed blacks, the general met the argument of racist Democratic demagogues by advising workers to "insist that the negroes in the South should have a right to vote, for that will be an inducement for them *to stay where they are.*"

Thus Guiney's independent labor campaign for Congress in 1866 represented the convergence of several progressive trends in Boston political history: the Fenian struggle for Irish nationalism, which attracted more support from Radical Republicans and labor reformers than it did from the Catholic church; the labor crusade for the eight-hour day, which gained important support from Radical Republicans and Irish nationalists; and the movement of Radical Republicans toward labor reform and Irish nationalism in an effort to win workers, especially immigrants, away from the Democratic party. However, the realignment that Guiney's third-party supporters hoped for did not take place in 1866. The general made a poor showing in the election. Although his candidacy was endorsed by the Boston *Pilot*, a newspaper that later turned from radical Irish nationalism to loyal Catholicism, Guiney still failed to woo the Irish-Catholic vote away from the Democrats. And although he won the support of prominent labor reformers and Radical Republicans, he failed to draw the Yankee workers' vote from the regular Republican candidate, who promised patronage and tariff restriction to protect Boston jobs. As Montgomery's analysis in *Beyond Equality* shows, both Democratic and Republican workers were afraid that a vote for Guiney would "simply help put into office the candidate of the party they traditionally opposed."

Guiney's 1866 campaign was neither the first nor the last independent labor-party candidacy to be wrecked by the old parties' appeals to workers' job consciousness (through tariff protection and patronage positions) and to their racialist consciousness (through rhetoric stirring up ethnic, religious, and racial fears). Boston's Irish-Catholic voters, for example, stuck to the Democratic party, which began to develop a rudimentary, ward-based patronage system in the 1830s. The Democrats cleverly played upon the Irish voters' suspicions of the Republicans (whose origins lay in anti-Catholic Know-Nothingism, abolitionism, and in various kinds of protectionism for Yankee capitalists who exploited Irish immigrant labor).

The rise of Fenianism and the crisis of the Civil War did break down Irish ghetto defensiveness to some extent. But the realignments anticipated by Guiney's crusade never took place. Irish Catholics did emerge for the first time as trade-union leaders, but they attached themselves firmly to the Democratic party, which soon provided them with attractive political careers.

The life of Patrick Collins personifies the attachment of the Irish to the Democratic Party. His mother brought him from famine-stricken Ireland when he was four. Young Patrick grew up in Chelsea at the height of the anti-Catholic Know-Nothing period; in fact, at age eleven he was forced out of school by Protestant schoolboys. He took a job in a fish shop, and then a strangely ironic

Patrick A. Collins, Fenian and trade-union organizer; first Irishman to be elected to the state senate; later elected mayor of Boston

chapter took place in his life. Robert Morris, a black attorney and a member of the Collins's church, befriended the lad and made him an office boy. Collins learned a good deal about law and politics, but he wanted to be a machinist. Unlike young Patrick Guiney, who practiced the trade in Lawrence, Collins could not find an apprenticeship because there was still considerable anti-Catholic sentiment. He wound up in a furniture shop, where he learned upholstering and discovered Fenianism through one of his shopmates.

Collins soon became an organizer for the Fenian Brotherhood and enrolled many Irish workers around the state during the war. He also helped found the Upholsterers' Union and led several strikes against his firm, even though he was promoted to foreman. As a prominent Irish Fenian and member of the Boston Trades Assembly, Collins was courted by the Democrats, who nominated him as a candidate to the state House in 1867. He served three years in the lower chamber and then became the first Irish Catholic elected to the state Senate. During this time he studied law and became the leading representative of Boston's increasingly vocal Irish-Catholic community. By 1882, when he won his first of three terms to the U.S. Congress, Patrick Collins was boss of the city's Democratic machine. "By the end of this time," Professor Montgomery writes, "this former Fenian and trade unionist had emerged as the archetype of the urban Democratic politician and defender of the Catholic Church"—which had frowned on the secret activities of the Fenians. Collins eventually became a wealthy man, a director of the International Trust Company, and, by the time he was elected mayor in 1901, the idol of Boston's aspiring Irish politicians and entrepreneurs.

In the late nineteenth century, however, few Irishmen could become lawyers and generals like Patrick Guiney or politicians and businessmen like Patrick Collins. Indeed, in 1880 there were only 18 Irish attorneys in Boston out of a total Celtic population of 35,000. By this time about fourteen hundred sons of Erin had become traders or merchants—mostly saloon keepers, morticians, grocers, and real-estate brokers. However, at this point almost 30 percent of the city's Irish remained unskilled laborers. Over ten thousand were common laborers toiling irregularly on the docks and various construction projects, and over seven thousand were servants.

The Irish domestics were, of course, for the most part women who worked in the homes of the Yankee bourgeoisie. As an Irish domestic told journalist Helen Campbell, author of a book called *Prisoners of Poverty:*

> "I hate the very words 'service' and 'servant.' We came to this country to better ourselves, and it's not bettering to have anybody ordering you around."
>
> "But you are ordered in the mill," [the author remarked.]
>
> "That's different. A man knows what he wants, and doesn't go beyond it [referring apparently to mill foremen]; but a woman [presumably an

> employer of servants] never knows what she wants, and sort of bosses you everlastingly. If there was such a thing as fixed hours it might be different, but I tell every girl I know, 'Whatever you do, don't go into service. You'll always be prisoners and always looked down on.' You can do things at home for them as belongs to you that somehow it seems different to do for strangers. Anyway, I hate it, and there's plenty like me."

There are many noteworthy aspects to this hard-hitting statement: the class consciousness of even the least industrialized Irish wage earners; the anger at the arbitrary authority of employers in a land which promised democracy and liberty; the despair of the Irish immigrants who felt imprisoned by poverty and degraded by their servility; the desire for a legal limit to the working day, which mill girls, but not domestic servants, enjoyed by statute (the 1874 ten-hour law was limited only to women and children in industry); and, finally, the immigrant woman's willingness to do unpaid housework and child care at home, for those who belonged to her—the same work that she hated to do for strangers.

Boston's Irish remained overwhelmingly working-class in 1880, and this class included the young women who worked in wealthy kitchens and sweatshops as well as the young men who toiled in the ditches and on the docks, mothers who took in sewing and washing in addition to their unpaid household labor as well as fathers whose earnings as unskilled laborers could scarcely feed a large family. Since Irish workers remained impoverished after the Civil War, they also remained institutionalized in Boston's jails, workhouses, and asylums. Poorly paid, irregularly employed, and frequently intoxicated, the Irish slum dwellers remained a social problem for the police, the charities, and the new class of social workers who called for reforms to quell the discontent of the "dangerous classes."

The Irish laboring masses did not gain much when one of their own kind served several terms as mayor in the 1880s. In comparison with Protestant immigrants who carried skills with them from Canada, Britain, Germany, and Sweden, the Irish fared poorly. In 1890, 65 percent of the Irish were still unskilled. Only 25 percent had skills as compared to 43 percent of the British, 48 percent of the Germans, 51 percent of the Canadians, and 55 percent of the Scandinavians, according to Stephan Thernstrom's study, *The Other Bostonians*. Only 6 percent of the Irish Bostonians born between 1860 and 1880 made it into the business and professional classes, as compared to 31 percent of the native-born Yankees.

Although the Irish did not move up the social ladder like the Yankees, they did move out of the urban slums to an inner ring of new, working-class communities. Originally the Irish migrated to follow their jobs as well as to obtain better housing. For example, Irish workers followed the Middlesex Railroad into Charlestown and later found Navy Yard jobs, so that by 1860, 40 percent of that community's residents were Irish Catholics. The construction of the South Boston docks and the expansion of manufacturing and railroads in the 1840s brought an incursion of Irish workers. In 1847, the residents of South Boston bragged that "not a single colored family" lived there, because South Boston accepted only Irish immigrants "of the better class who will not live in cellars." Fol-

Workers' Houses, Silver Street, South Boston
Source: Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities (SPNEA)

lowing the Civil War, Irish migration to South Boston continued and it became a predominantly working-class community.

Irishmen and the sons of Irishmen remained overwhelmingly working-class, with the exception of the few who rose through Democratic party politics or as entrepreneurs in contracting, saloonkeeping and undertaking. In his impressive study of Massachusetts politics entitled *The Gentle Reformers*, Geoffrey Blodgett discusses the paradox of Irish poverty and political loyalty to a Boston Democratic party headed by Yankees and increasingly conservative Celtic bosses:

> By the mid-nineties the Irish made up over 60 percent of the city's population, but they constituted a vastly larger percentage of the labor force. Most Irish workers remained unskilled, though in certain trades, notably those connected with building—contracting, masonry, and carpentry—they had made good advances. Most postal workers and policemen were of Irish extraction, and the Irish enjoyed a virtual monopoly of the city's manual labor force. But according to the findings of an Irish lawyer in 1896, his people could boast of not a single large bank manager, and only one representative on the floor of the Boston stock exchange. The Irish controlled one savings bank and one small local trust company . . . and contributed less than one percent of the city's lawyers, doctors, dentists, architects and civil engineers.

However, the lowly economic position of the Irish "did not breed automatic resentment among Irish spokesmen toward Yankee domination of business and the professions," according to Blodgett. "It remained as much an incentive to greater efforts toward mobility as it did a cause of class hostility." Spokesmen such as Patrick Collins gained much of their prestige "from their intimacy with the mighty men of State Street, from their success in crossing the barriers separating most Irishmen from the Yankee world."

As Stephan Thernstrom shows in his studies of social mobility in Boston, most immigrants' inability to rise out of the working class into the business class did not necessarily discourage them from thinking that their sons might become Irish Horatio Algers. As we shall see in Chapter 5, many of the most articulate sons of Erin, trapped in oppressive laboring jobs, chose to follow in the footsteps of Patrick Collins and use politics as a form of social mobility. This applied to Irish trade-union politicians as well as to ward politicians like James Michael Curley.

The transformation of Irish immigrants from a class of poverty-stricken peasants into a working class of wage earners and household laborers occurred largely because of capitalists' insatiable demands for cheap labor. But the making of the city's Irish working class was not entirely the result of these demands. The Irish made their own history throughout the period. In the 1850s, they built urban Catholicism to reestablish their cultural and spiritual traditions in a hostile Protestant world, dominated at the time by the anti-Papist Know-Nothings. In the 1860s, many joined the Union Army and the Fenian Brotherhood and became more aggressive as American nationalists and Irish republicans. In the 1870s (before the depression) and the 1880s (after prosperity returned), they joined and often led trade unions, acting more militantly in strikes than their Yankee fellow workers. By the end of the nineties Irish Catholics, still overwhelmingly working-class, had taken over the Democratic party in Boston. All of these events marked important steps in the making of the city's Irish working class.

A beleaguered minority of peasants and paupers in 1850, the Irish came to dominate Boston's working class by 1900. These workers had by and large forsaken the militant republicanism of the Fenians for the conservative populism of the Democrats. The radicalism of the Knights of Labor had been abandoned in favor of the AFL's business unionism, to be described in Chapter 4. Irish workers were for the most part more job-conscious than class-conscious. Their leaders, despite rhetorical attacks on blue-blooded Brahmins, preferred to ally with Yankee power-brokers rather than make common cause with the new immigrants who flocked to Boston in the 1880s and 1890s, replacing the Irish at the bottom of the heap.

4

Boston's Ethnic Working-Class Communities

As the Irish strengthened their working-class community, other immigrants came to Boston and experienced the same shock of urbanization and industrialization. The new immigrants from southern and eastern Europe often replaced the Irish at the bottom of the heap in a quite literal sense: they took the low-paying construction and sweatshop jobs and moved into the slums, which Boston's Irish immigrants had inhabited. In some cases this process of replacement occurred without conflict, because the Irish were moving out of the lowest-paying manual jobs and the worst inner-city slums to new housing in the emerging zone of suburbs. In other cases, however, there was direct conflict between the Irish and the newcomers over jobs and housing. This was the case in the North End, where the Irish and Italians fought violent battles around the turn of the century.

The immigrants who flocked to Boston after 1880 came primarily from southern Italy and eastern Europe. However, there were also significant numbers from Greece, Syria, Latvia, China, Jamaica, and Portugal. Southern blacks also came north in increasing numbers, causing a noticeable expansion of the Afro-American community. The experience of these immigrants was similar to that of the Irish but there were significant differences as well, especially among the blacks, who were certainly not just "the last of the immigrants."

Pressed by the enormous concentration of their number in the central city, the Irish began to spread out after the Civil War. Some prosperous Irishmen purchased homes in fashionable streetcar suburbs such as Roxbury and Dorchester, but most rented in three-deckers or bought older row houses in areas closer to the central city, such as Charlestown, South Boston, and the South End.

The South End was one of the first areas in which the more established Irish workingmen and tradesmen replaced the Yankee middle class. In fact, this process occurred quite rapidly in the South End. In the 1850s and 1860s middle-class families, and even a few Beacon Hill Brahmins, moved into the new bowfront houses constructed on the massive landfill around the old Boston Neck. This land reclamation project—one of the great nine-

Immigrant children from Italy, Boston, 1900
Source: Gino Agraz, photo by G. Frank Radway

New immigrants on the Boston docks, ca. 1905
Source: Boston *Globe*

teenth-century engineering feats—was of course performed largely by Irish laborers. And then, when railroad yards and factories appeared on the district's boundaries, it was clear that Irish-Catholic workers would soon follow. And when the Archdiocese of Boston started to build a cathedral at the end of Union Park in 1867, it signified that the South End would not remain an elite neighborhood of Yankees.

The fire of 1872 destroyed downtown manufacturing enterprises, so more light industry—furniture and piano making, for example—filled the South End's borders. The depression of 1873 depreciated the housing market. Banks sold row houses along Columbus Avenue to working-class families after wealthier families failed to make mortgage payments.

As the Yankee bourgeoisie fled to streetcar suburbs and the fashionable town houses of the Back Bay, the workers and tradesmen, many of them Irish, transformed the South End's red-brick bowfronts. The new owners, lacking the money to hire servants, subdivided the buildings into lodging houses, catering especially to immigrant workmen and Yankee clerks, including many women who worked in Boston's offices and shops like E. A. Filene's department store.

In John P. Marquand's novel *The Late George*

Apley, the protagonist's grandfather, "like so many others," had been drawn to the area "to build houses around one of those shady squares" at a time when "nearly everyone was under the impression that the district would be one of the most solid." However, one day the elder Apley saw a man sitting on a bowfront stairway in his shirt-sleeves, and he immediately decided to sell his South End property and move to Beacon Street before he saw the South End "metamorphose into a region of rooming houses and worse."

Yankee concern about the district's metamorphosis was reflected in the studies by settlement-house workers collected in Robert Woods's volume, *The City Wilderness* (1898). William I. Cole, who directed the South End settlement house with Woods, wrote that lodging houses were as bad as tenement houses as breeding grounds for "noxious habits" among the poor. "The variety of people thrown together promiscuously in lodging houses is a matter of constant surprise," he remarked. "The very freedom of lodging-house relations is very likely to result in relaxed morals. The almost universal absence of a common parlor where the lodgers may receive their visitors, especially those of the opposite sex . . . tend[s] still more to break down social and moral barriers."

Cole was obviously more concerned with the breakdown of morals than with the breakdown of social barriers in the South End. In fact, as we shall see later, the region was somewhat unusual because its racial and ethnic mixture helped to destroy some of the social and cultural barriers that divided workers in other, more ghettoized parts of the city. In any case, moralistic Yankee social workers like Cole ignored the value of the lodging house as a cheap accommodation for single working people, who needed to live close to their jobs.

Boston was still a walking city for most workers. Approximately two thirds of the South End's factory operatives lived in the area. Women who worked in the South End's numerous laundries for as little as $3.50 a week could not afford daily carfare from other parts of the city. According to a 1903 settlement house study: "They are therefore obliged to live within easy walking distance of the shops in which they work." Laundry owners complained that Chinese competition was hurting them and that they could not pay higher wages and remain competitive. The owners also said that wages were low because most of their working girls were subsidized; that is, they lived at home with families whom they helped to support.

In 1884, the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics published Carroll Wright's study *Working Girls of Boston*. The study revealed that an increasingly large number of women—38,881—worked in Boston, and that of these 18,000 labored as domestics. Many women worked as domestics for middle-class families because they could earn up to $9.00 a week, as compared to $5.00 a week in manufacturing or $4.50 in retailing. Working conditions for domestic servants differed from those of working women in manufacturing, who not only received poor wages but aged prematurely. "In the clothing business," wrote Carroll Wright, "the general testimony is that work is very hard and is the cause of a great deal of sickness among the working girls so employed." Many women in the garment industry, which had swollen during the Civil War, reported that long hours and hard work "seriously affected their health."

Despite these conditions and the highly exploitative pay rates, young women continued to work because wages paid to men were usually not sufficient to sustain a family, particularly if the family had a mortgage on a house. In fact, increasing numbers of married women joined their single sisters and daughters in service and factory labor.

Of all the foreign immigrant groups surveyed in 1911, more married Irish women (27 percent) were working than any other group. Italian and Jewish immigrant husbands discouraged their wives from working. Fewer than 15 percent of these women worked for wages. As Robert Woods wrote in *Americans in Process* (1903), a settlement-house study of the North and West ends, Italian housewives often tended gardens outside the city or gathered firewood for sale. Married women did not work in factories, but "Italian girls and young women quite commonly work in confectionery factories. Some of them, and some of the Jewish girls as well, are now found behind the counters of the department stores. But Jewish women sel-

Tileston-Hollingsworth Paper Mills, Hyde Park, ca. 1890

dom leave their homes to work." Many single Italian and Jewish women also worked "with the men in the garment shops."

Jewish and Italian fathers also encouraged their sons to work. As Woods noted in 1903:

> The pressure upon children to become wage earners as soon as the compulsory period of school attendance is passed, so as to supplement the family income, is, except in the case of Jewish girls, well-nigh universal. Office boys, cash boys and messenger boys in the city are largely Irish. Jewish boys monopolize the downtown newspaper trade. Italian boys are boot blacks.

Immigrant families also took lodgers and sometimes boarders into their homes to help defray living expenses or mortgage payments. Boarding was especially common in black families, who earned the lowest incomes in the city because of job discrimination. This also accounts for the fact that married black women worked in much greater proportions than their counterparts in other immigrant groups. While only 5 percent of all white married women worked, 30 percent of all black married women worked, twice the rate of labor-force participation found among Jewish and Italian married women. The extent of black women's work is only one indication of the significant differences between the Afro-American experience and that of other immigrants.

After the Civil War, Boston's black population increased faster than the average (49 percent as compared to the overall increase of 30 percent be-

A group of workers in lower Roxbury, ca. 1910

tween 1865 and 1878). As a result, the center of the Afro-American community began to shift away from "nigger hill," as the west side of Beacon Hill was called, to the South End and lower Roxbury. Like other internal population movements, this one resulted partly from the need to be closer to jobs. Black men moved to be nearer jobs in the railroad yards and stations in the South End, black women to be nearer the laundry and restaurant jobs of a district dotted with such establishments.

Although Afro-Americans faced many of the same hardships confronted by the Irish and the immigrants who came from eastern and southern Europe after 1880, they were not simply another immigrant group. Blacks were American-born, they were dark-skinned, and many had been slaves. Although black activists broke down Boston's dual school system in the 1850s, residential segregation soon became so severe that de facto educational segregation returned—and that is why the same fight had to be fought over one hundred years later. Conditions grew worse, not better, for blacks who clustered in the new ghetto that spread down Columbus Avenue from the South End to lower Roxbury.

Despite the increase in black people coming to Boston in the 1860s, no natural increase occurred in the city's nonwhite population, according to Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck. Life expectation was so short and childbirth so precarious that the survival of the black race in Boston was in doubt. Furthermore, job discrimination, which systematically deprived black artisans of their trades in southern and northern cities, made black males much more transient than whites. Only 29 percent of a sample of black men remained in Boston for the whole decade of the 1870s, as compared to 64 percent of white males in the sample. Skilled workers and entrepreneurs lost ground in the black community instead of growing and advancing as they did slowly in other ethnic communities.

Black families suffered from institutional racism. Black men sometimes deserted their families, usually because they were searching for work, a depressing adventure in the wildly fluctuating economy of the late nineteenth century. Some sociologists, notably Daniel P. Moynihan, insist that a female-headed, "unstable" black family emerged in this period as a result of slavery, which emasculated or "infantilized" black males. In fact, instability in the black family resulted mainly from urban

A group of black nurses, ca. 1890

conditions, particularly unemployment. By 1880, 16 percent of Boston's black families were female-headed, a sign of the instability of urban life, but this was hardly a "tangle of pathology" peculiar to black families. In the same year, according to Tamara Haraven's statistics, there were more white female-headed households than black, ranging from 18 percent in South Boston to 27 percent in the South End.

It is tempting to view discrimination against blacks as similar to that experienced by other immigrants who flocked to Boston after 1880, especially the southern Italians and Eastern Europeans. However, in the 1880s and 1890s, Catholics from Sicily and Jews from Poland and Russia found a wider range of occupations available to them than did blacks. While Italians gained slowly and Jews dramatically in artisan and entrepreneurial trades, the blacks had already lost out in both. It would have been difficult in 1912 for a black migrant from Virginia to write a book called *The Promised Land* as did Mary Antin, a Jewish immigrant from Poland. Antin makes fascinating comments on her father's difficulties as an entrepreneur in Chelsea and the chaos of immigrant family life in the South End's Dover Street ghetto, but she concludes by singing the praises of America. "Poverty was a superficial, temporary matter," she wrote in retrospect; "it vanished at the touch of money."

Few immigrants living in Boston in 1912, including Mary Antin's Jewish cohorts, would have agreed with her optimistic views on the transiency of poverty. Few Italians or Jews got rich quick. Even Mary Antin, despite all her optimism, knew this. In fact, *The Promised Land* was written to help gain acceptance for the new immigrants at a time when immigration restrictionists sought to cut off further entry by Southern and Eastern Europeans.

In her study of the Immigration Restriction League of the 1890s, Barbara Miller Solomon shows how Boston Brahmins, led by Republican Senator Henry Cabot Lodge, led the fight to restrict immigration through the use of literacy tests. In *Ancestors and Immigrants,* Professor Solomon explains that the nativism directed against the Irish before the Civil War was exceeded by a racialism directed against the new immigrants before World War I. Of course, this racialism, which assumed that Jews and Italians were inferior, fed on the deep-seated racism already existing in the United States; it was a long-standing tradition that took a particularly ugly form during the 1890s, when a new wave of lynchings accompanied new disfranchisement and segregation laws. Lodge and the Immigration Restriction League not only won the support of liberal Yankees such as Harvard President A. Lawrence Lowell and social worker Robert Woods, they also gained support from Irish politicians and trade unionists, who feared the competition of the new immigrants. The mass strike by textile workers of many different nationalities against Lawrence, Massachusetts, mill owners in 1912 increased the demand for immigration restriction, because it showed that the new immigrants were capable of fighting back against oppression in spite of their divisions.

In Boston, the new immigrants threatened Irish control of jobs, housing, and political machinery in the North and West ends. In the West End, master machine politician Martin Lomasney maintained Irish political control long after the area became predominantly Italian and Jewish. Lomasney actually helped to mute ethnic conflict by incorporating some of the newcomers into his patronage machine. But the conflict became violent in the North End, where John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald and his Irish machine represented a similar "rotten borough." The Irish would not give way to the new immigrants without a fight. As a result, a running battle erupted between the Irish and the Italians, who competed for the same jobs and the same housing. The Catholicism of the two groups did not bridge the gap. In fact, Irish domination of the clergy merely became another Italian grievance.

Competition for jobs was the source of conflict. As William Foote Whyte writes in "Race Conflicts in the North End:"

> The Irish were [t]here first, and resented the intrusion of Italians, whom they considered an inferior people. As a matter of fact, the new im-

migrants had had few educational opportunities, and most of those from Southern Italy could not read or write. While the Italians possessed the same religion, their language, customs, and dress were incomprehensible to the Irish. There were also more material reasons for the clash. While the Irish when they immigrated had been as poor as the Italians, they had since improved their lot considerably, and they looked upon the Italians' low standard of living as a menace. Through ignorance of the language and ways of the country, the latter were dependent upon "padrones" [labor contractors] for securing work, and could thus be used to undercut the wages paid to the Irish. Also, since many of the first generation planned to return to Italy, they spent as little as possible and sought to build up their savings. This indicated to the Irish, who were permanently settled, that the Italians did not have the community interest at heart.

At this time "the Irish gangs controlled the waterfront," according to Whyte. "During the day, anyone could walk through the section unmolested, but when the sun went down the Irish gathered on their corners and it became dangerous for an

The immigrants' city: Atlantic Avenue in the North End, ca. 1900
Source: Boston Public Library

Winter at T Wharf, ca. 1900
Source: SPNEA

Italian, a Negro, or a Jew to try to go through their territory. This was particularly galling to the Sicilian fishermen who had settled on and about North Street and found the Irish standing between them and their fish pier. For some years, when a Sicilian fishing boat came in after dark, its occupants often elected to sleep in the boat rather than attempt to run the gauntlet to their homes. This blockage was not accepted passively by the Italians."

These conflicts reached their most violent point during the depression years of the 1890s, when Irish politicians like John Fitzgerald and Patrick Maguire helped build their reputations by pushing for laws to protect Celtic workers from cheap Italian labor. This is one of the reasons that the Irish leaders of the unions and the Democratic party joined with their professed enemies, the Brahmins, in the Immigration Restriction League. By 1895, however, it was clear that Irish dominance in the North End was on the wane. The area was a polyglot district with 7,700 Italians (mostly Sicil-

Italian fishermen, T Wharf, ca. 1900
Source: SPNEA

ians), 6,800 Irish tenaciously holding on to their turf, and 6,200 Jews (mostly Russians), who tried but did not always succeed in avoiding the violent battles.

The ethnic conflicts in the North End struck outside observers as ironic since the populations of this district had so much in common. As Robert Woods wrote in 1903:

> There is a much greater uniformity of industrial status in these districts than in any other part of the city. The North End is so particularly characterized by this sameness that it proved difficult to register on a map the slight shades of difference from block to block in that district. It is a great community of the unskilled—of those, on the one hand, who have not yet had time enough to rise, and those, on the other, who are the stragglers left behind by the more enterprising of their kind.

Indeed, settlement-house workers were impressed

by the overwhelming problems of survival shared by North Enders. As Woods noted in *Americans in Process:*

> How people subsist when out of work is a question which is exceedingly difficult for the outsider to understand. Ordinarily families have some bit of savings to fall back upon. Then there are the small basement stores giving credit. There are occasional small jobs. Perhaps the wife can go out to work, or the children are pressed into employment. Relatives and friends often go to surprising lengths in supplying food and loaning money. There are successive journeys to the pawnshop. All the time subsidies of charitable relief are unfortunately more available than recourses in the way of self-support.

And yet, in the midst of violent conflict, oppressive work, and the poverty induced by unemployment, the North End throbbed with colorful human activity. In 1903, when the Italians were still one of the poorest groups in the city (frequently working as gang laborers for $1.25 a day), two Yankee social workers, Jesse Fremont Smith and Ann Withington, observed that Old Country culture flourished; it was almost a kind of resource that the Italian immigrants used to help cushion the blows they took as urban workers. Smith and Withington wrote for *Americans in Process* of "Life's Amenities" in the North End:

> The light-heartedness of the Italians, and their keen love of pleasure, make an atmosphere so full of gayety that a spectator for the time is led to overlook the many discomforts which must naturally fall to the share of a people so closely crowded together. But perhaps these discomforts affect the Italians less than any other race, for they love the open air and the general fellowship of their kind, and every possible moment is spent beyond the confines of the house walls. The first glimpse of spring brings with it thronging streets, crowded doorways and well-filled open windows. With uncovered heads, the women and girls saunter up and down the sidewalks, or with their bits of crocheted lace, intended for home decoration, sit in some doorway or at an open window, where they may gossip with a neighbor or join in a gay street song. Here too may be seen the curved knitting needle used by the older Italian woman as she rounds out the stocking for the coming winter. The men crowd the curbstone or open street, discussing the politics of their country, their personal injuries or the possibilities for assisting some less fortunate brother. Groups of men and boys, numbering fifteen or twenty, congregate in some street or square, and immediately there is such emphatic utterance, fiery denunciation, violent gesture and all-pervading excitement as would convince the unaccustomed that a mass meeting was discussing the wrongs of a nation, rather than that a casual group of neighbors was exchanging gossip.
>
> The street offers much to vary what is otherwise often a life of mere monotony and toil. The street piano, which is an ever-present, ever-welcome entertainer, starts the children dancing. Their feet have already forsaken the steps of Italy. It is not any peasant dance through which they flit, with the native lightness and aptness of their rhythmic land; it is the prancing, burlesqued grace of the Afro-American cake walk. The hurdy-gurdy is played by Italians of the south, and each instrument is usually accompanied by a man and a woman, the latter's deft handling of her tambourine often calling forth enthusiasm from the onlookers. These women retain the full peasant costume as a dramatic property. The short, full skirts are usually made of some cotton stuff. The kerchiefs worn about the shoulders, of the brightest yellows, the richest browns and purples and the most brilliant reds and greens, bordered with bands of colored flowers, are not in the least dimmed by the bright blues, magentas and Roman stripes of the aprons, which are always a part of the street dress. Even the folded kerchief thrown over the back of the head, as a protection from the rays of the sun, is more or less gay. The arrangement, however, of these bits of color is often of the very crudest. The kerchiefs, the quaint jewelry, the long ear pendants and the talisman worn

about the neck are much coveted bits of decoration, highly prized by the possessors and passed down from generation to generation.

It is ironic that many Irish-Americans shared Yankee prejudices against the new immigrants, notably Boston's 30,000 Italians, who were seen as an "inferior breed" incapable of assimilating into the mainstream like the old immigrants. In fact as Stephan Thernstrom shows in *The Other Bostonians*, the Irish still had much in common with the Italians. Both groups were overwhelmingly proletarian. "A mere 10 percent of Italian men employed in Boston in 1910 held white-collar jobs," just about the same fraction as Irishmen who held similar posts in 1890. The same proportion of Italians (65 percent) remained unskilled in 1910; "precisely the same fraction of the Irish twenty years earlier" lacked skills.

Nonetheless, the Irish and Italians remained in separate cultural worlds. The Irish-dominated clergy could not make Catholicism a truly common bond between the two groups. The distance between them literally increased as the Italians began to predominate in the North and West ends as well as in East Boston, and the Irish moved to other sections within the city—the South End, Mission Hill, or Charlestown, or to nearby towns like Cambridge and Somerville.

The "inner ring" communities contained housing that represented a substantial improvement over tenement dwellings, but these double- and triple-deckers lacked many of the amenities of the streetcar-suburb housing and suffered from sub-

Playing in tenement alley, Boston, 1909
Source: George Eastman House, photo by Lewis Hine

dividing and overcrowding. For example, in one inner-ring area, South Boston, a certain section on the hill was still reserved for the cream of the immigrant crop, the "lace curtain" Irish, but in one ward (13) many of the worst problems of the central-city slum remained. Ward 13 was inhabited largely by Lithuanians and Russians, who suffered a death rate twice that of Brighton, Dorchester, or Jamaica Plain. South Boston, once an escape from the horrors of inner-city life, became urbanized as it became more industrialized.

In a social survey of the early 1900s entitled *The Zone of Emergence*, the city's leading settlement-house workers, Robert and Eleanor Woods, commented on the qualities of the proletarian colony of Lithuanians in South Boston, which displayed "racial clannishness"; a nationalism that led to the building of a separate Catholic church; a strong network of benevolent societies; a system of taking in boarders, as opposed to the English system of taking in lodgers who had no part in family life; and a "socialistic sentiment prevalent among the young men." (Those young men often worked as tailors, but also as longshoremen or laborers in the iron foundry, the sugar refinery, and the brush-making industry in South Boston.)

These characteristics, which other immigrants, such as Sicilians and Russians, often shared, contrasted with those of the "assimilated" Irish, who lived in the older residential wards higher up the hill in South Boston. Yankee social workers were pleased with the assimilation of the Irish, those in the "lace-curtain" homes of South Boston's City Point. These Irish had moved out of the slums

New three-deckers in Dorchester, ca. 1900
Source: Bostonian Society

Bartenders at the Bell in Hand Tavern, Williams Court, Boston
Source: SPNEA

around Fort Hill and "established themselves as citizens" and homeowners in South Boston. Often they purchased additional property, which they rented to new immigrants, for instance the Lithuanians. "It is the story," the social workers concluded, "of the Celt adapting himself to a situation dominated by Anglo-Saxon habits of mind and Puritan reserve of feeling. South Boston remains the home of self-made men."

Although settlement-house workers were pleased by the bourgeois values that Irish families on the heights of South Boston seemed to be adopting, other working-class families in the "zone of emergence" displayed troublesome characteristics. In East Cambridge and Roxbury as well as in Dorchester and Cambridgeport, the escape from the tenement to the three-decker did not transform working-class culture. These communities featured bigger housing, better schooling, less crowding, more home ownership, and petty entrepreneurship; they were, Robert Woods observed, "distinctly more habitable" than the downtown tenement districts. "The air is . . . cleaner; sunshine falls in floods rather than narrow shafts; there is not so much dust and smoke; the streets are quieter; there is less congestion." Still, as Professor Warner notes, the inhabitants of these new working-class suburbs failed to "meet the

minimum standards of middle-class morality" as defined by Woods and the Yankee social "uplifters." To these progressive social investigators, working people in the zone of emergence revealed a disturbing lack of two important Yankee traits: active citizenship and prideful workmanship. Irregularity of employment, juvenile delinquency, loose sexual morality, and alcoholism all combined to create the same forms of family instability that troubled settlement-house workers in the inner city. Furthermore, instead of helping to americanize these former immigrants, the new housing patterns in the zone simply became another setting for racial clannishness and corrupt patronage politics. The churches failed to make significant changes in working-class life-styles. The trade unions, which seemed to Woods to be leading agents of Americanization, remained very weak in these peripheral communities because so many workers commuted to their jobs.

In any case, the inner-city slums still caused social reformers more anxiety than the newer communities. The South End, which Woods labeled *The City Wilderness* in an 1898 study, contained some of the worst aspects of inner-city life: tenement housing, poor sanitation, ill health (reflected in one of the highest tuberculosis rates in the country), crime, vice, idleness, sexual immorality, and political corruption. Woods quoted Dr. Edward Everett Hale, who said that the part of the South End between Dover Street and Pleasant Street was the "most charitied region in Christendom." Charitable activities ranged from "child saving" through the Children's Aid Society to setting up new dietary standards in working-class homes through the New England Kitchen; from the Boston Bath House Company—to cleanse the unwashed masses—to the Stamp Savings Society, which encouraged thrift among workers. Despite all this, Woods believed that among the South End's immigrant workers there was "no concerted action for a better social life, no watchfulness over the common interests." Into this wilderness stepped the ward heeler who based his corrupt power on the street-corner gangs of unemployed "bullyboys" and "barflies." The ward politician based his appeal upon a promise to watch out for the common interests of immigrant poor.

Robert A. Woods (standing, second from right) with settlement-house workers
Source: United South End Settlements

Woods and his fellow reformers hoped to use the settlement house to replace ineffective charities on the one hand and corrupt ward bosses on the other hand. These reformatory houses, Woods argued, were settled in the inner city to

> reestablish on a natural basis those relations which modern city life has thrown into confusion, and to develop such new forms of cooperative and public action as the situation may demand. To foster and sustain the home under tenement conditions, to rehabilitate neighborhood life and give it some of that healthy corporate vitality which a well-ordered village has; to undertake objective investigation of local conditions; to aid organized labor both in the way of inculcating higher aims and in the way of supporting its just demands; to furnish neutral grounds where separated classes, rich and poor, professional and industrial, capitalist and wage-earning, may meet each other on the basis of common humanity.

Robert Woods had lofty goals for the settlement houses: ultimately he aimed to bring civilization as he knew it to the city wilderness. And like other progressive reformers in the age of Theodore Roosevelt, Louis Brandeis, and Woodrow Wilson, he sought to reduce class conflict. Like his close political ally Josiah Quincy IV, Boston's reform Democratic mayor in the late nineties, Woods favored trade unions with "just demands"—organizations pledged to rational arbitration rather than militant action. Like other members of the new professional class, Woods tried to convince rebellious workers and arrogant bosses to compromise in order to reduce the violent anarchy of late nineteenth-century urban life.

To the immigrant worker, Woods and the settlement-house staff offered Americanization and social mobility through educational and moral reform. As historian Marvin Lazerson points out in his book *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915*: "Pride of work and industriousness when taught in the melting pot of the public school would restore—to rich and poor, native-born and immigrant alike—a common value system." According to Woods, manual training (that is, vocational education) would provide immigrant children with the Yankee values of the New England artisan and bring the "children of the wealthier classes in more intimate relationship with manual labor;" this process would "bridge the chasm now broadening so rapidly between the wealthy classes and the bread winners." Of course, Woods's hopes for vocational education were naive. Manual training did not acquaint wealthy children with work, nor did it provide immigrant children with the skills, let alone the values, of the New England artisan.

Woods's hopes for the settlement houses were almost as naive. These spearheads of progressive reform in the city did help americanize many immigrants; they did help expose many corrupt bosses who were taking advantage of their constituents; and they did help encourage some respectable clubs and trade unions in the slums. The settlement-house professionals were misguided, however, when they sought to "rehabilitate neighborhood life" according to Yankee values; they ignored the vitality of Boston's ethnic subcultures, which provided poor people with meaningful cultural activities. When Woods set out to give the inner city "some of that healthy corporate vitality which a well-ordered village has," he mistakenly believed he could bring the cultural homogeneity of the New England town to the city; he also ignored the existence of actual urban "villages" among working-class immigrants, which, according to anthropologist Herbert Gans, could still be found in vital sections such as the old West End during the 1950s.

Robert Woods and the Yankee reformers, who looked at the South End and saw an urban wilderness, failed to see the structure of immigrant working-class life. Looking only for Yankee communal values of discipline, order, and sobriety, they denigrated immigrant communal values. They failed to see that working-class forms of cooperation existed in the diversity and disorder of South End life; and that a peculiarly urban spirit of toleration could be found in the inner city that was lacking in the New England village, despite all of the democratic values it was supposed to represent.

Although life in the South End contained misery as well as anarchy, the people in this highly mixed district displayed a remarkable ability to get along with one another, a spirit sorely lacking in more homogenous ethnic communities in the city. As Olive DeCosta, a native of the South End's New York Streets tenement district, recalled of her youth in the early 1900s: "The kids got along very well together. Everything was united. They were all together. There was no big issue of race. In recent years it's started to make a big difference. But it didn't when we lived down there in the New York Streets neighborhood in the twenties and thirties. You know what I think it was? We were all poor. You didn't have more than me. And that made you my equal. That's why I loved the South End. I still love it. I wouldn't want to live anywhere else in the world."

George Adams, whose father was a Jamaican immigrant employed at South Station, confirmed Olive DeCosta's memory of the South End from a black perspective. Adams grew up in the Castle Square neighborhood, which, he remembers,

"consisted of Irish, Armenian, Jewish, Italian, and Polish along with blacks. It was a high mix." Adams recalls: "I attended the Abraham Lincoln school at the corner of Tremont and Arlington streets, and there were never any integration problems there. The only 'imbalance' situation we had at that time was that all the people in the school were poor people, not wealthy people. I remember going home from school—changing my clothes and going out doors to play stickball, marbles, and all the other childhood games with all the different kids in the neighborhood. It was grand. We had our differences but we admired each other for those differences."

Boston's working-class immigrants, new and old, white and nonwhite, shared many similar problems—making a living, maintaining decent housing, and raising children. But they found it difficult to unite in order to solve these problems on a community-wide basis, let alone on a city-wide basis. Like the Irish, who gravitated to certain ghetto neighborhoods, the new immigrants remained strongly localistic. For example, Sicilians in the North End settled on streets that were inhabited by their own *paesani*, or countrymen from specific areas of Sicily, and remained suspicious of Italian immigrants from other regions. This parochialism inhibited political and labor organization and played into the hands of Italian labor contractors (*padroni*) and Irish politicians such as John Fitzgerald, who could easily divide and rule his North End bailiwick.

Italian laborers were caught in a vicious cycle around the turn of the century. The Irish dominated construction and dock unions, and excluded Sicilians because they undercut the construction and dockworkers' union wages by working through the *padroni*. Since Italians were shut out of labor unions they were forced to rely on the *padroni*, just as they relied on labor racketeers in the period after the labor contractors were outlawed. Working people needed protection—Irish laborers depended upon the patronage boss, and Italian laborers often depended upon racketeers. In the early nineteenth century, Italians formed benevolent and protective societies (there were one hundred in Boston by 1910), which often restricted membership to immigrants from certain provinces. Unlike the handful of benevolent societies that were organized by radical artisans, often from Northern Italy, "the geographically based organizations retarded the development of an Italian-American labor movement"; that is, most societies perpetuated local divisions and "blocked concerted action by men in the same trade," according to Edwin A. Fenton, author of "Italians and American Labor." In fact, leaders of the societies were often prominent local businessmen and professionals (*prominenti*), who opposed unions. Critics charged that unlike the radical artisan societies, the localistic organizations "were often controlled by the very worse [sic] element in the Italian colony," men who founded societies not out of a sense of fraternity but to satisfy their ambition and vanity.

In general, ethnic parochialism played into the hands of the patronage politicians and caused havoc with labor-union organizing efforts. "In 1900 the new metropolis lacked communities that could deal with the problems of contemporary society at the level of the family and its immediate surroundings, and it lacked a large-scale community that could deal with the problems of the metropolis," Professor Warner observes in *Street Car Suburbs*. As a result of "enervating parochialism," Boston's "community life fell into a self-defeating cycle." As Warner observes:

> Each decade brought an increase in the scale and complexity of economic and social life; each decade's problems demanded more wide-scale attention, more complex solutions. Because of the physical arrangement of the new metropolis, each decade also brought an ever greater fragmentation of community life into town and ward politics, church groups, clubs, and specialized societies of all kinds. The growing parochialism and fragmentation resulted in a steady relative weakening of social agencies. Weakness, in turn, convinced more and more individuals that local community action was hopeless or irrelevant. From this conviction came the further weakening of public agencies.

The flight of the middle class to the suburbs had

created two worlds. For the middle class, the world of the urban working class was indeed a "city wilderness" of immorality, instability, and political corruption. What caused this polarization between the suburban business-professional class and the urban working class? "The dominant ideal of individualistic capitalism with its accompanying unwillingness to bring private profit to account had caused the economic division of the society," writes Professor Warner. "The slums and the suburbs were the physical expression of this division. The conditions of the central city which so dismayed the middle class were the product of its failure to control the distribution of income, its failure to regulate housing and working conditions, its failure to develop an adequate welfare program for the sick and unfortunate."

It is obviously wishful thinking to suggest that things would have been different if only the middle class had remained in the city to cope with its problems. Robert Woods and his settlement-house reformers attempted to bring middle-class values and morals back to the city, but they failed. Woods and his reformist ally Mayor Josiah Quincy IV briefly asserted themselves as guardians of the public interest; but privatism still dominated over corporatism, despite the efforts of Yankee reformers, because the business class had never viewed the city as anything more than a marketplace in which to pursue profit.

When it was still comfortable for the wealthy to live in urban town houses, there was much talk about restoring the lost values of community. By 1882 Brahmin critic Charles Eliot Norton would remark, "Men in cities . . . feel much less relation with their neighbors than of old." Cities like Boston now contained "less civic patriotism; less sense of spiritual and moral community." By atomizing society, urbanization created the "selfishness of individualism." Norton mistakenly blamed urban life rather than capitalism for the privatism that ran rampant in Boston during the Gilded Age, but his views reflected the pessimism of the Yankee elite about the prospects of saving their city upon a hill, the "Athens of America." After the Civil War the predominance of Irish immigrants convinced most Yankee businessmen that the city was no longer habitable. A few supported Robert Woods's settlement houses or selected charities, but most gave up the paternalistic notion of creating a traditional New England community in the city wilderness.

Boston's workers had to build their own communities and solve their own problems as workers, not as the passive recipients of Yankee charity. They did build their own communities based upon the traditions of vital ethnic subcultures, but they failed to solve their common problems as members of the working class. Part of the blame for that failure must lie with their leaders, notably the bosses of the Democratic party and the trade unions, who despite their hatred for the Brahmin bluebloods shared many privatistic values with them. Despite occasional outbursts of class-conscious rhetoric, these bosses never advanced beyond narrow ethnic prejudice and job consciousness.

5

Ward Bosses and Business Agents: Middlemen for the Working Class

The thirty-odd years between Hugh O'Brien's election as Boston's first Irish-Catholic mayor in 1884 and the end of the First World War were years of great significance for Boston's ethnic workers, especially the Irish, who remained predominant. During this time Irish politicians captured the Democratic party lock, stock, and barrel, making it possible for Boston's greatest machine politician—James Michael Curley—to win two terms as mayor in the early 1900s. During the same years the trade unions affiliated with the American Federation of Labor gained in strength. By the end of World War I, the Boston Central Labor Union, which represented all of organized labor in the Hub, reached unprecedented size and influence.

To some extent, the growth of the unions was related to the prosperous years enjoyed by Boston's extremely diverse industrial and commerical economy after the 1890s depression. The Boston Central Labor Union was dominated by the business agents of the various trade-union locals. Although the Anglo-Americans, Germans, Italians, Jews, and Afro-Americans sent a few delegates to the Central Labor Union, the vast majority of the business agents were Irish.

This chapter describes the parallel emergence of the ward politicians and the union business agents, and analyzes their role as middlemen between the working class and the employing class. We also account for the emergence in the period around World War I of a new type of big boss whose influence extended far beyond the ward or the union local. James Michael Curley became the first city-wide political boss by appealing over the heads of the ward bosses to the working class as a whole, and particularly to the Irish. Once in office, Curley could take over the functions of ward bosses by distributing patronage on a city-wide basis. Similarly, the Italian trade-union boss Dominic D'Alessandro, who rose to prominence at about the same time, replaced the *padroni* or labor contractors on the one hand and the local trade-union officials on the other hand. By the end of World War I, D'Alessandro's influence had spread far beyond the North End to the city of Boston and the eastern cities generally. Finally, we will explain why the ward bosses and business agents emerged as the

Municipal workers in the North End, 1900

principal spokesmen and representatives of the Boston workers. We hope these explanations will shed light on the privatistic values and localistic tactics which triumphed over the collectivist values and socialist or anarchist tactics of the radical critics. We also hope that the information in this chapter will advance our understanding of why the twentieth-century Boston labor movement has developed in a relatively conservative direction.

The Irish bosses at first ignored the Italians, Jews and other new immigrants, but as wards in the West End and the North End started to lose Irish majorities, politicians were forced to adjust. For example, Martin Lomasney ruled like a baron in West End Ward 8 after he had ousted a rival Irish ward heeler in 1886. Born of poor immigrant parents, Lomasney struggled through youth as a bootblack, errand boy, and metal spinner until he found his calling as a ward boss. As Boston's "Mahatma," the first politician in the city to perfect patronage politics, he stated the function of the ward boss forcefully:

> Is someone out of a job? We do our best to place him and not necessarily on the public payroll. Does the family run in arrears with the landlord or the butcher? We lend a helping hand. Do the kids need shoes or clothing, or the mother a doctor? We do what we can, and since, as the the world is run, such things must be done, we keep old friends and make new ones. . . . I am right there with them all of the time, and that's what counts. When you live with people three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, they get to know you and trust you. . . .
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> I think that there's got to be in every ward someone that any bloke can come to—no matter what he's done—and get help. Help, you understand, none of your law and justice, but help.

Lomasney, an extremely clever politician, manipulated aspiring Jewish and Italian politicians in Ward 8 and kept control of his bailiwick until well after the turn of the century. In his novel *Ward Eight*, Joseph Dineen writes of a character named Hughie Donnelly, who is modeled after Lomasney and described as a person with awesome power:

> He was loved and hated with full Gaelic intensity. He was hated by none in the Irish Colony and by many outside of it. He was respected because he assured the members of the clan their livelihoods. He was feared because he could deprive them of work instantly. His influence extended into every field; he was a political specialist, a combination of actor, politician, diplomat, padrone, stevedore, and employment manager.
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> He furnished bail for craps-shooters, drunks, and minor criminals, and donated the largest sums to churches and religious causes. He was indispensable in arranging for dances and social functions, and although he appeared only annually in public, his presence in any troubled or riotous area was more quieting than a platoon of mounted police.
>
> When shippers, freight-handlers, railroads, contractors, or the gas company needed laborers, they came to Hughie and he furnished them at so much per head. When saloon-keepers wanted licenses, Hughie got them at so much per license. Bail was furnished at varying fees, depending on the circumstances of the person involved. Certain city jobs might be purchased at a price set by Hughie. He ruled the colony with a mailed fist and he was the only trusted court of domestic relations.
>
> His blacklist was a powerful weapon, a tabulation of offenders, their crimes and punishments. Liquor dealers and saloon-keepers were often instructed to refuse to serve beer or liquor to offenders. A traitor to the war lost his job, became a social outcast, drank himself to death, or moved away.

John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald, the North End boss, came from a more privileged background than Lomasney. Born to a lace-curtain Irish family in the North End liquor and grocery trade, he went through the Boston public schools and attended Harvard Medical School until his father's death. After working in the Boston Customs House, Fitzgerald was elected to the General Court in the troubled depression year of 1893. He advanced the interests of his working-class constituents by poli-

Mayor John "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald distributing Christmas baskets at Salvation Army headquarters, People's Palace, December 24, 1910. Mrs. Fitzgerald is seated at left
Source: Gino Agraz, photo by G. Frank Radway

ticking for protection of (Irish) workers against (Italian) contract labor and by campaigning for an eight-hour day for city workers.

The rise of the new, job-conscious, politically astute ward boss in the late nineties paralleled the ascendancy of a new kind of trade-union leader—the job-conscious, craft-union bureaucrat, who served a relatively exclusive constituency of workers. With job consciousness came political conservatism and an end to the partisan radicalism that Boston's labor movement had displayed since 1830. The turning point came in 1886, when the May Day strikes for the eight-hour day failed and the Knights of Labor declined. Symbolically, George McNeill, founder with Ira Steward of the Eight Hour League, stood for mayor in 1886. The Knights and the Union Labor party (which also nominated Henry George, author of *Progress and Poverty*, for mayor of New York) endorsed his candidacy. McNeill, an old-fashioned labor radical in the Seth Luther tradition, polled an insignificant vote and lost the election to the popular incumbent, Mayor Hugh O'Brien. McNeill failed to pull Irish workers away from the Democratic party. Job consciousness and ethnic identity remained stronger than class consciousness.

While McNeill went down to defeat in his 1886 independent candidacy, his protege Frank Foster, a printer active in Knights of Labor leadership, ran for lieutenant governor as a Democrat and pulled an impressive vote in Boston. After McNeill's defeat Foster assumed editorship of the *Labor Leader*. He promptly abandoned the newspaper's support for the Knights of Labor and endorsed the new American Federation of Labor, which he helped to found, along with Samuel Gompers of the cigar markers and Peter J. McGuire of the carpenters.

At first, these men considered themselves socialists, despite the American Federation of Labor's narrow craft-union focus, but Foster and Gompers soon abandoned socialism for pure trade unionism. "Pure and simple" trade unions were however forced to do battle for many years with socialists; they reaffirmed the tradition of the Knights of Labor who had organized across lines of sex, race, or craft and had reasserted the need for an independent workers' party dedicated to the creation of a cooperative commonwealth.

Frank Foster, former Knights of Labor leader who helped bring together the Boston AFL and the Democratic Party

As the AFL's leading defender of bread-and-butter craft unionism in Boston, Frank Foster still listened to the chorus of radical voices that echoed throughout the Hub in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Edward Bellamy's immensely popular anti-capitalist novel, *Looking Backward,* was published in 1887 and stimulated the rise of Nationalist Clubs espousing Bellamy's utopian ideas. The first such club was, of course, in Boston. Over the years it attracted a group of distinguished men and women including old reformers like abolitionist Thomas Wentworth Higginson; noted novelists Edward Everett Hale, Hamlin Garland, and Willian Dean Howells; Lawrence Gronlund, author of *The Cooperative Commonwealth*; John Boyle O'Reilly, editor of the Irish *Pilot*; and Solomon Schindler, Boston's first Reform rabbi. This socialistic club also included a remarkable group of women's-rights activists, notably Julia Ward Howe and Lucy Stone; Frances A. Willard, the prohibitionist; Helen Campbell, the journalist; and two leaders of the Women's Educational and Industrial Union, Mary A. Livermore and Abby Morton Diaz.

Other Massachusetts reformers committed themselves to Christian Socialism, because they believed that morality and competitive capitalism were incompatible. Christian Socialism was practiced by settlement workers such as Vida Scudder, and preached by social gospelers including W. D. P. Bliss, Jesse Jones, and Franklin Monroe Sprague, the Congregationalist minister from Agawam, Massachusetts, who declared that the choices were clear: "pro-capitalism or anti-capitalism . . . caste or equality; riches or righteousness; competition or co-operation . . . in a word Individualism or Socialism." Other friends of the Boston working class included radical economists such as Frank Parsons of Boston University, who exposed the monopoly corporations of the day; muckraking journalists such as B. O. Flower of the *Arena,* who revealed the horrors of slum life in the Hub; and agitators such as Herbert Casson, the Methodist minister who established a labor church in Lynn based upon the idea that religion had "become an opiate," and that Jesus Christ was "the most . . . influential of all working men."

Frank Foster could function in this progressive milieu. Foster had no real differences with the social gospelers who wanted to achieve the co-operative commonwealth without class struggle and he even supported women's suffrage. As Boston's leading craft unionist, Foster found that his principal antagonists were the Marxists. Led by Henry Abrahams, chief of the Boston cigar makers, Boston's Marxian socialists belonged largely to the Socialist Labor party. Like Daniel DeLeon, the SLP's leader, Abrahams and the Boston Marxists attacked the AFL's "pure and simple" craft unionism. "Instead of being a militant, class conscious organization, ever watchful of the interest of the workers and ever ready to do battle," DeLeon declared, the AFL trade union had "reduced itself to a mere benevolent organization, doling out charities for sick- and death-benefits, thus taking upon itself the functions of an ambulance service of the industrial battlefield, taking care of the wounded, burying the dead, and stripping itself of all other functions."

At the national level, DeLeon and the SLP attempted to win control of the faltering Knights of Labor, while other socialists attempted to challenge Samuel Gompers's increasingly conservative leadership in the AFL. In 1893, socialists won support from a majority of the AFL's locals for direct political action to win a number of demands, notably "plank number 10" for "collective ownership by the people of all means of production and distribution." After a bitter debate in the Boston Central Labor Union and a special convention of the Massachusetts State Federation of Labor, Frank Foster and his Democratic allies defeated Henry Abrahams and the Massachusetts socialists, who favored plank number 10.

This debate over socialism within the AFL occurred during one of the worst depressions the country had suffered. "The bitter winter of 1893-94 in Boston, as elsewhere, impressed many social reformers as being the beginning of those hard times preceding a secular day of judgement," writes Professor Mann in *Yankee Reformers in an Urban Age.* "Firebrands like Herbert Newton Casson and Morrison I. Swift descended upon the General Court on February 24, 1894, with several thou-

sands of the unemployed; theirs was a noisy, and fearsome, demonstration." Before he joined Coxey's Army in a huge march of the unemployed on Washington, the bold Mr. Swift, author of a utopian socialist book, told a gathering at Faneuil Hall, "We propose to take away the property of the rich—by law." The mood of the less radical labor leaders was described later in a remarkable novel by Frank Foster entitled *The Evolution of a Trade Unionist* (1903). The book describes "frenzied mobs" of Boston sweatshop workers who, during the panic of 1893, "set fire to every clothing house and hunted down the owners, whom they slaughtered as a pack of wolves would their prey."

This rising concern with mass insurrection, combined with the pressure applied by socialists inside and outside the State House, helped push rather conservative Democratic legislators such as North End boss Honey Fitz in a more progressive direction. These legislators joined with more liberal figures such as Josiah Quincy IV to help win Massachusetts a reputation as a state friendly to labor. In fact, by the mid nineties the Bay State's Democrats had emerged as something of a labor party, according to Geoffrey Blodgett's study, *The Gentle Reformers: Massachusetts Democrats in the Cleveland Era.* As Professor Blodgett shows, the depression of 1893 created mass hardship that "confronted Boston with a sudden social and political emergency." The effects were most severe in the clothing industry, but unemployment soon spread throughout the working class. A survey of over thirty Boston craft unions actually showed that 37 percent of the unions' members were unemployed. Furthermore, the emergency was creating a problem for the Democratic party, whose disaffected working-class supporters were expressing more interest in the radical organizers of the unemployed, such as Morrison Swift, in the socialist agitators, such as Martha Avery, and in the populist orators, such as Mary Elizabeth Lease of Kansas, who spoke to fifteen hundred workers on the Common during the depths of the depression.

Into the breach came the patronage bosses, notably the Mahatma, Martin Lomasney, who controlled city jobs worth $80,000 in salaries during the depression—a source of relief far greater than the private charities. But the depression had created another crisis for other Irish Democrats. The Democratic party was breaking up on a national and state level—conservatives defended President Grover Cleveland, while liberals joined with populist insurgents to nominate William Jennings Bryan in 1896. And with the death of city boss "Peajacket" Maguire in 1896, the Democratic ward heelers fell out among themselves. Josiah Quincy, the last of the Yankee Democrats, stepped forward as a reformer, with strong labor support, who stood above the warring ward bosses.

Socialist organizer Morrison I. Swift leads unemployed workers' demonstration at the State House, where he confronts Sergeant at Arms Remington and Police Sergeant Crowley
Source: Gina Agraz, photo by G. Frank Radway

Quincy worked to restore unity among competing Irish ward politicians by creating a Board of Strategy where ward leaders could meet to discuss electioneering and the distribution of patronage. In return, the bosses agreed to support Josiah Quincy's mayoral candidacy as a Democrat in 1895. Ironically, at the very moment when the

Irish took total control of the Democratic party machinery from Yankee conservatives, the bosses turned to a Yankee reformer as their standard-bearer. They would never do so again; but in 1895, young Quincy proved a valuable candidate because he helped restore the loyalty of Boston workers to the Democratic party. As Blodgett writes:

> Many of Boston's trade unionists had lost faith in the Democratic party during the recent depression years. But others remembered Quincy's splendid labor record in the state legislature and hoped for an end to certain hiring practices engaged in by the city in the past, now that he was mayor. Their resentment centered on municipal contracts by which city work was let out to private contractors who used the cheapest labor they could find. To woo the affection of organized labor, Quincy promoted the alternative system of direct hiring of union labor by the city. He expanded the city's public works department to include a division of electrical construction and a division of buildings repair, and by the end of his mayoralty hundreds of union men were gaining off-season employment from the city.

Quincy and his spokesmen in the Boston Central Labor Union, notably Frank Foster, had grounds to worry about the working-class vote even though depression discontent seemed to be on the wane. In November of 1898, James Carey, socialist shoe worker, was elected mayor of Haverhill, where Foster had published a labor paper. Carey, who left Daniel DeLeon's SLP to join the new Social Democratic party founded by Eugene V. Debs, received the support of the socialist-led Boot and Shoe Workers Union. This industrial union helped elect another socialist as mayor of Brockton in 1899, a thirty-year-old shoemaker named Charles A. Coulter. In contrast to the labor governments elected by active socialist worker movements in Haverhill and Brockton, Quincy's experiments in municipal socialism were not meant to bring workers' control of city services and public works. Rather, Quincy's reforms were designed to shore up the Democratic party's sagging labor support.

Despite the common suffering induced by the depression and the failure of Democratic and Republican government officials, Boston's workers remained separated from each other by ethnic and religious differences. Even the Socialist Labor party in Boston, which strived for class-conscious solidarity, reluctantly split into English and Hebrew sections. The Jewish immigrants, who brought a socialism grown out of their struggle against czarist oppression, simply did not speak the same language as their German-American comrades. Boston's factionalized socialist movement also lacked the unifying force of a radical industrial union like the Boot and Shoe Workers, which helped to create solidarity in industrial towns like Haverhill and Brockton where working-class socialism was strong during the 1890's.

Mayor Quincy's efforts to create a unionized public-job sector threatened the exclusive patronage powers of the Irish bosses. After prosperity returned in 1899, they turned their backs on the last Yankee Democrat and nominated one of their own for mayor—Patrick Collins, the "sage of Irish Democracy."

After Josiah Quincy IV's demise and the rise of the Irish machine in 1900, Yankee reformers tried to limit the power of the politicians who in their eyes were corrupt, irresponsible demagogues. Robert Woods criticized the ward heelers in *The City Wilderness,* because he was troubled by the bosses' ability to mobilize the youth gangs or bullyboys and saloon crowds in order to advance career and personal fortunes. Yet he also recognized that the bosses functioned to get people jobs in neighborhoods with high unemployment. In fact, Woods was on friendly terms with Smiling Jim Donovan, a boss who thrived because he "satisfied the individual desires by doing private favors."

Power was at the root of the conflict between municipal reformers and Irish ward bosses. Woods, head of the Settlement House, thought that reformers should try to satisfy individual desires through public action. If the city could deprive the boss of his function as a private dispenser of favors, the public interest would triumph. As a result,

Woods joined the administration of Mayor Quincy and launched a program of public baths. Adopting the classic paternal posture of the progressive reformer, Quincy crowed over the construction of the public baths: "The City is now doing *things* for the people which were formerly thought to be outside its scope. For instance, it had made a good beginning at bathing them—or at least at helping and encouraging them to bathe." Quincy's Public Bath House Committee satisfied several groups—Yankee reformers such as Woods, concerned with tenement-house filth and cleansing the unwashed; the Democratic party, which received credit for the reform; and the various unions, particularly the plumbers' union, which received jobs in the construction of the baths.

As we shall see, the bosses, reformers, and unions would find it more difficult to cooperate after 1900. Though many AFL trade-union leaders curried the favor of particular Democratic politicians, some progressives in the labor movement recognized that the ward bosses' personal style of dispensing jobs inhibited the development of a strong, independent labor movement in Boston. The Russian Jewish socialists in the united Hebrew trades who criticized the Democratic bosses were joined by progressives such as Mary Kenney of the Women's Trade Union League and Jack O'Sullivan of the Seamen's Union. At times, the labor movement in general found itself in direct conflict with the patronage machine. During the great building boom that affected Boston and other cities between 1898 and 1908, patronage politicians and union bosses usually cooperated with construction companies in order to get jobs for their constituents or members. Occasionally, however, the union and political bosses clashed when open-shop employers won contracts.

For example, in 1901 the Boston Elevated Company pushed legislation to divest the city of the elevated rails, which it owned. The Boston Central Labor Union opposed further moves by the company to expand its system with nonunion labor, but the political bosses, who could expect to get jobs for their constituents, backed the expansion of Boston Elevated. "The power of the local political leaders depended very largely on their ability to get jobs for their constituents. As intermediaries between workers and employers, they preempted the normal position of union leaders," writes Richard Abrams in a study of Massachusetts politics, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era*. "The situation suited both employers and politicians, and it accounts in large part for the lack of a genuine labor movement in Massachusetts, as well as for the opposition of the Boston Central Labor Union to the position of the Boston politicians on this bill."

Under Patrick Collins and John Fitzgerald, who followed him as mayor, the bosses were more comfortable than they had been under Quincy, when control over certain city jobs slipped out of their hands. The bosses had no use for any kind of municipal socialism, even Quincy's bland reformism. Like the Yankee businessmen who controlled the city's money, the Irish politicians who controlled the Hub's politics were individualists; they opposed centralized collectivism not only because it smacked of socialism, which Catholic Cardinal O'Connell condemned as a sin, but because loss of patronage at the ward level would affect their own business and political careers.

As James Michael Curley recalled in his autobiography, *I'd Do It Again*, many ward politicians enhanced their business fortunes through politics; this was especially true of Irish saloon-keepers. James Michael himself spent some months in 1905 at the business end of a bar. Bosses who enriched themselves through politics and business were often honored as local boys who made good. In fact, within his own ward, even if it was impoverished, the boss could freely indulge in ostentatious behavior. As Curley wrote of the South End's political bigwig Smiling Jim Donovan:

> He was a fabulous spender known for his sartorial elegance. When you dined with Jim, you could be sure of having the best vintage champagne, and the cigar he handed you at the end of the repast was always choice Havana. I can still see Jim walking into the bar of the Winter Palace Hotel or the Woodcock and, with a sweeping gesture, ordering a round of drinks for everyone in sight. Jim was one of the ward

bosses catered to by railroad executives early in the century. Nobody was obliged to pay a fare to New York or way stations if he knew the Chairman of the Ward Committee or an alderman. Passes were collected in bunches by all the influential politicians, and distributed among their friends. The intent of the railroad tycoons, of course, was to keep the politicians in a friendly legislative mood. Modern lobbyists who depend on social and business contacts use more subtle forms of currying favor with politicians.

Municipal reformers despaired when John Fitzgerald became mayor in 1905 and the hopes of the Quincy years vanished. A Good Government Association (GGA), founded by progressive businessmen and reformers such as E. A. Filene and Robert Woods, unsuccessfully opposed Honey Fitz. In 1907, however, a GGA investigation of corruption in Fitzgerald's city hall cost the mayor his reelection.

In 1909, the Good Government Association successfully proposed a charter reform that removed party designations and eliminated ward-based voting, in order to cut down the power of ward bosses by depriving districts of their own representatives. This effort in municipal efficiency was part of the progressive effort to undermine the power of the elected patronage bosses, and to enhance the influence of businessmen and professionals in more centralized city governments. The Good Government Association supported James Storrow, a civically involved businessman, as its mayoral candidate against Honey Fitz in 1909. Despite the active efforts of the settlement-house workers, Fitzgerald beat Storrow in the 1910 nonpartisan election. Storrow's defeat was all the more bitter because the new reform charter made Fitzgerald mayor for four years rather than for two. Using his new powers and the security of a four-year term, Fitzgerald started building schools, streets, sewers, and subways. He also raised the salaries of city laborers and gave them a half day off on Saturdays.

The at-large system of electing candidates was designed to cut down the power of politicians like Councilman James Michael Curley, who had built up ward-based machines. But this system did not stop Curley. Unlike the old ward heelers, James Michael used his city office to develop voting support throughout Boston's working-class wards (known popularly as "the Curley wards" in years to come). He made a deal with Honey Fitz to stay out of the 1910 mayoralty race in return for the congressional nomination, which he promptly translated into a successful campaign for Congress.

It is appropriate to look at Curley's background to understand his new political style. Curley's politics grew from his experiences as an Irish "slum brat" in Roxbury: his patronage to working people was an expression of the suffering that he had experienced in his youth, and his belief as an adult that he should help others who shared the Irish immigrant experiences of unemployment, underemployment, substandard living conditions, and ethnic discrimination. At the same time, Curley regarded a political career as an avenue from the working-class slum to personal wealth and social status. He reflected on his experiences as a youth in his autobiography, *I'd Do It Again*:

> I worked at the drug store while attending grammar school and for three years after graduating from the Dearborn, becoming acquainted during this time with the residents of Ward Seventeen. On the side I studied, and soaked up culture by reading the *Boston Evening Transcript* and books I obtained at the Roxbury branch of the Boston Public Library. Hugo, Dumas, Thackeray, James Fenimore Cooper and Dickens were my favorites. Some of the youngsters in the novels of Charles Dickens reminded me of myself.
>
> I was fifteen when I went to work for the nearby New England Piano Company, operating a spiral-screw machine. For the first time I learned where "sweatshops" get their name. We slaved away in overalls and undershirts in the blistering temperatures required in those days in the manufacture of pianos. I chewed cut-plug tobacco on the advice of my co-workers, who said it prevented excessive perspiration, colds, and "the con," as tuberculosis, a prevalent disease then, was called. During the nine months I worked here, my weight dropped from 134 pounds to

Chickering Piano Factory in the South End
Source: Boston Public Library

eighty. I was paid $7.50 a week until put on piecework, and when my pay increased to as much as $16 a week, the boss put me back on the former schedule. I therewith decided to leave for greener pastures. . . . .

To the young Curley growing up in the "waterfront slums of ward seventeen," the Back Bay mansions on the other side of the tracks "seemed like castles." He soon learned that they were the homes of some of the "barons who exploited Irish labor." So, even as a boy, Curley knew he "belonged to an Irish Catholic minority . . . despised socially and discriminated against politically." Like many ethnic pols Curley harbored class resentment as well as a consciousness of ethnic and religious persecution.

Politicians like James Michael had no intention, however, of remaining exploited and oppressed. Curley made no secret of his desire to use politics in the way Yankee Horatio Algers used business. "I chose politics because industrial conditions were deplorable, and prospects of ever getting anywhere seemed remote," Curley wrote. "Hours were long, wages were low, and working conditions were sometimes dangerous, in the absence of safety devices, as well as unsanitary and unhealthy—especially in the sweatshops."

Curley was not exaggerating working conditions and occupational mobility. In *The Other Bostonians,* Stephan Thernstrom shows that Yankee workers had much better chances for upward mobility. By 1890, 65 percent of the Irish still worked in unskilled laboring jobs; only 24 percent of Yankees and 25 percent of Germans did so. While 11 percent of the sons born to Yankee blue-

collar fathers between 1860 and 1880 rose to professional, managerial, or entrepreneurial status, only 4 percent of the sons born to Irish blue-collar fathers rose. As late as 1909, only 3 percent of Thernstrom's second-generation Irishmen were in "business for profit." The Boston Irish remained working-class and job-conscious.

James Michael Curley rose rapidly in Boston politics after his election to the Common Council. In 1899, he decided to take on Peajacket Maguire's old machine in Ward 17 (Roxbury). Maguire had run the ward inconsistently, and could not be relied on to deliver votes with the same precision as John Fitzgerald in the North End, Smiling Jim Donovan in the South End, Martin Lomasney in the West End, Joseph J. Corbett in Charlestown, and Patrick J. Kennedy in East Boston. In the campaign Curley won the support of the Ancient Order of Hibernians in Ward 17, and formed his own Tammany organization, modeled after Boss Tweed's Tammany Hall in New York, save that Curley alone was boss. He ran the club without lieutenants.

Significantly, Curley won his first public office by outflanking a ward boss. He ran as an honest reformer who could get more things done for people than old pols, who had counted him out in the 1898 election. Curley promised to minister to the needs of constituents personally (by helping with a job, a passport, a rent payment, etc.). In this way, he hoped to emerge as a kind of super-boss, capable of rising above the ward machines.

Unlike some of his predecessors, Curley saw rising strength in the labor movement. He recognized the growth of the American Federation of Labor in the early 1900s and promised his Tammany Club supporters that he would back more humane labor legislation. Like other patronage politicians, Curley also built up support among unorganized workers—still the vast majority—and increased their dependence upon his machine for jobs and favors. In 1901, he sponsored a bill for supplemental unemployment relief in the Common Council, "but the resulting legislation was far from sufficient" to meet the problem. In the same year, Curley's Tammany Club "inaugurated the custom of providing Thanksgiving and Christmas baskets for destitute families."

Curley also fought for city employees, who were predominantly Irish and largely unrepresented by unions in the early 1900s. "In 1900," Curley recalled, "city laborers were laid off without pay during inclement weather, while clerks and supervisers [probably Yankees] remained on the job and drew full salary. I introduced an order that would make it mandatory for all employees in the Street Department to be laid off without pay on inclement days. And, as I anticipated, there was a storm of protest from clerks and foremen. The up shot was that laborers received the same treatment as other members of the department. I was also instrumental in increasing the pay of these laborers from $2.00 to $2.25 a day." Curley was functioning like a one-man union. City employees, lacking their own unions, were becoming more dependent upon him as an advocate and defender as well as a *padrone*.

One of Curley's more dramatic political acts came in 1903 when he and another Ward 17 politician took a civil-service examination for two Tammany Club members who were trying to get post-office jobs. Curley and his colleague were tried and convicted. Both were sentenced to sixty days in the Charles Street jail by Judge Lowell. While behind bars, they ran for reelection. Both were returned to office by substantial majorities. A scandalized reformer wrote that "their release from prison was turned into a triumphal reception. The sentiment of the ward definitely elevated the function of job getting by hook or crook as the great and paramount service of the local politician to his constituency." In later campaigns, Curley would plant a supporter in the crowd, who would shout, "Why don't you tell the audience why you once spent sixty days in jail?" Curley would then explain how he took the civil-service exam for a friend. And "he did it for a friend" became a Curley slogan.

James Michael Curley rose dramatically in the period before World War I. After serving a term in Congress, he aimed his sights on city hall. After the Good Government Association had exposed corruption in Fitzgerald's administration and had launched a campaign for his recall, Curley bluffed

Honey Fitz into withdrawing from the race by threatening to expose more corruption. James Michael then "mocked and humiliated" the Good Government candidate for mayor, who proposed to reduce taxes. This, said Curley during the campaign, was "another way of saying the rich would get richer, the poor, poorer." A last-minute endorsement from Mahatma Lomasney assisted the rising Roxbury pol, who won the mayor's office by carrying the city's working-class wards.

The AFL supported Curley because it was now moving into open alliance with the Democratic party. It had abandoned nonpartisanship in 1908 after a series of blows from the employers' open-shop drive and the courts. By this time, AFL leaders in Boston had defeated the Marxian Socialists, who demanded political independence. The Federation had endorsed the Democrats very reluctantly, however. President Samuel Gompers was loath to abandon the AFL nonpartisanship and to sacrifice voluntary job action in favor of reform action through the political parties, which he believed to be dominated by business interests. However, antilabor rulings by the courts against union boycotts and in favor of

Demonstration of Boston unions against the imprisonment of AFL President Samuel Gompers, Faneuil Hall, 1909
Source: Gino Agraz, photo by G. Frank Radway

prosecution of unions under antitrust laws forced Gompers and the AFL to abandon their nonpartisan position in the hopes that the Democrats would pass anti-injunction legislation. The Democrats, however, lost the elections of 1908, and the attacks on labor continued. In fact, Gompers was held in contempt of court and nearly imprisoned in 1909 for mentioning the name of an antilabor company that the courts had prevented unions from boycotting. The labor movement held immense rallies in support of Gompers in Boston and other cities.

Meanwhile, the Massachusetts state senate, dominated by business-oriented Republicans, became known as the graveyard for labor legislation. In 1908 the State Federation of Labor supported several important bills, including statutes limiting court injunctions against unions (which the Supreme Court had allowed by making unions the legal equivalent of trusts), and providing for an eight-hour day for public employees (which the Boston movement had pushed since the Civil War). All measures were lost, and so in 1910 some trade unionists called for the formation of a labor party like the one that had swept antilabor legislation from the books in Britain. However, the Democratic party, despite its inability to halt the antilabor offensive in the courts, was too entrenched to be replaced as the party of labor.

Curley's election as mayor in 1913 breathed new life into the local party just as Woodrow Wilson's election to the presidency had done on a national level a year earlier. Curley's mayoralty marked a new era in Boston politics—an era in which organized and unorganized workers of Boston paid homage to James Michael Curley as their protector and defender. He expressed their hostility to the Brahmin ruling class by taxing the property of the wealthy, mocking their respectability, and defeating their efforts to recall him. Curley also undercut some of the job-getting power of the old Irish ward heelers and Italian *padroni*. He did this by opening city hall to everyone who wanted a job or favor and who came to see him personally. As many as 50,000 people a year did come to ask for favors.

In these early years of the twentieth century Curley worked with the AFL labor unions, which expanded their influence considerably. Unlike earlier ward bosses, he realized that friendly unions could mobilize thousands of working-class voters.

James Michael Curley and son in South Boston St. Patrick's Day Parade, 1917

In the long run, the growth of the Curley machine probably weakened organized labor in Boston, but in the short run his organization grew in tandem with that of the AFL. While the mayor's centralized patronage machine served the unorganized and unemployed workers, the expanding Boston Central Labor Union (BCLU) represented organized workers on a city-wide basis.

By the turn of the century, the trade unions in Boston were winning wide acceptance as the bargaining representatives of working people. As settlement-house worker Robert Woods wrote in 1898:

> Each year marks a growth of trade-union sympathy among the people. When there is a

street-car strike, local inhabitants cheerfully walk any distance. Employers who are branded by trade unions as unfair gradually become unfair in the eyes of many outsiders too. Membership in a union is much more a thing taken for granted than it used to be even a few years ago. Trade-union labels, which serve to identify to the consumer the products of organized labor, are constantly more in evidence, especially those of the cigar-makers, the printers, the hatters, and the shoe-workers. Several union barber shops exhibit the barber's label in their windows. A number of establishments—too many of them saloons—exhibit the Building Trades Council's certificate, showing that their repairs are done by union workmen. The increasing consideration given by politicians to the labor vote is significant. No political poster or circular appears nowadays without having upon it the trade-union label.

State factory legislation, and the position taken by the City of being a model employer of labor, are both results of the power of the trade unions along with the gradual trend of popular sympathy toward them.

As Woods concluded:

> The great improvement in all the conditions of labor that has been wrought during recent years is without any possible question the result of working-class organization. The standard wages and the regulation hours of labor in the different trades, to the entire extent that they represent progress for the working classes, have been secured by organized action on the part of the men in those occupations.

There are parallels in the rise of Curley's city-wide patronage machine and in the growth of the Boston Central Labor Union. Though he lacked Curley's personal magnetism, Harry Lloyd, business agent of the Carpenters Union and later President of the BCLU, personified the emergence of a new type in union politics—the labor bureaucrat. Curley surpassed the old ward bosses by organizing patronage power on a city-wide basis, while Lloyd and other business agents centralized power, reducing inner-union democracy and local autonomy. Curley argued that his centralization of patronage power allowed him to act much more aggressively against city banks and businesses. Lloyd said the business agents' centralization of union power enabled them to bargain more aggressively with employers. This was undoubtedly true in the first case, but highly dubious in the second case. Boston unions did act militantly in the early 1900s, but this was not necessarily the result of bureaucratic centralization. As we shall see in the case of Harry Lloyd's own Carpenters Union, the democratic structure of the 1890s encouraged far more militancy.

In any case, the increasing aggressiveness of working-class political and union organization in the early twentieth century did not mean that leaders like Curley and Lloyd refused to make deals with business. Despite the anti-corporation rhetoric of the progressive era, popular politicians maintained close ties with big business. Indeed, these new politicians presented themselves as more efficient and business-like than their backward, localistic predecessors.

In describing the rise of the business agent and business unionism, labor historian Philip S. Foner writes:

> In the late 'eighties and 'nineties, the trade unions faced savage attacks by employers. Spies infiltrated and wrecked local after local; militant unionists were blacklisted. If a committee of workingmen approached an employer with demands for improved conditions, they were likely to be fired. In the face of the employers' offensive, the youthful A. F. of L. unions found it necessary to delegate authority to organize workers and represent them in negotiations to full-time organizers who would not be dependent upon employers for their livelihood. The man who filled this job was the "walking delegate," also called the business agent.

These agents had many powers—to give out jobs, organize new members, collect dues and pay out benefits, call strikes, police the contract, and represent the local in the Central Labor Union. "When employers lost the power to intimidate

union leaders by discharging them or threatening to do so, they tried the next best thing—to buy them out." Foner continues that employers "quickly learned that it was cheaper and more expedient to pay off union officials than to meet the demands of the rank and file." This does not imply that most business agents were on the take, but it does show how corruption crept into unions through the business agent, whose powers often overshadowed those of the elected officials who were directly responsible to the rank and file.

The young business agents who rose to prominence in AFL unions around the turn of the century were pragmatic men of a bureaucratic mentality, who felt it was their job to manage the affairs of the union for the members. If they were less likely to engage in blatant graft and self-aggrandizement than the political ward bosses, they nonetheless shared the same privatistic values. The agents of business unionism who controlled the Central Labor Union had no more use for socialism than the bosses of the patronage machine. As Robert Woods noted in 1898:

> The Central Labor Union represents, with a few unimportant exceptions, all organized labor in the city. It adjudicates difficulties that arise between different trade unions, supports them in their complaints against employers when they seem to have good cause, secures City and State action in the interest of working men and women, and assumes a general responsibility for the interests of the wage-earning classes. It now has very solid support and authority; it is still somewhat harassed by the more extreme Socialists in its membership, but the opposition it has met in years past from the Knights of Labor has ceased with the almost complete disappearance of that body in Boston.

In the Carpenters Union (Boston's biggest AFL affiliate), business agents arose to challenge the national leadership of President Peter J. McGuire, a founder of the AFL who maintained some of his youthful socialist principles. Like rival "Reds" in the Socialist Labor party, McGuire feared that trade unionism would become an end in itself. If bureaucratic business unionism triumphed, the AFL organizations would merely become trade associations operating on capitalist principles. Like the original founders of the AFL, McGuire believed that militant trade unions could help build the cooperative commonwealth in which the wage system would be abolished and private profit liquidated. A fighting labor union could educate workers to socialism through its struggles; it had no need for bureaucratic business agents. So strong were Peter McGuire's convictions that he blocked the creation of administrative posts to enhance communication between the district councils and the national office. At the height of the carpenters' strike offensive for the eight-hour day and better wages in 1891 McGuire said:

> The tendency of the labor movement is towards simplicity, autonomy and federation. Simplicity of organization, autonomy of function and federation of interests. Workmen have no use for complicated machinery with intricate cogs and wheels in labor organizations. The simpler it is the better [it is] understood.

McGuire believed that simplicity of organization increased rank-and-file participation. If an administrative structure became too complex, trade unions would be captured by a clique of union politicians who would manipulate uninvolved members.

The business agents' image contrasted starkly with that of the labor radical. The types even looked different. McGuire was unkempt. He had a long, drooping mustache and deep-set, burning eyes. He rode freights and used militant socialist rhetoric. On the other hand, business agent Harry Lloyd, leader of the carpenters' Boston District Council, was "a good speaker and fair and conservative in all he had to say," according to a Lloyd contemporary. "He dressed well in dark clothes, wore a heavy gold chain and charm and might have been mistaken for a young lawyer."

McGuire's views were increasingly in conflict with those of bureaucrats like Harry Lloyd. "To educate our class, to prepare it for the changes to come, to establish a system of co-operative indus-

try in place of the wage system, to emancipate the workers from subjugation to the capitalists, these are our ultimate objects," McGuire declared. An intelligent, undisciplined, selfless radical of the old school, McGuire retained the loyalty of the rank-and-file carpenters and withstood the successive challenges of business agents, but in 1900 he finally gave up the fight.

After the leadership struggle, P. J. McGuire retired and the business agents, such as Boston's Harry Lloyd, took over the powerful Carpenters Union. Some of these business agents were accused of accepting bribes from employers, robbing their own treasuries, raising their own salaries, selling union labels, and extorting money from employers. Some of these same labor racketeers or grafters copied the expensive dress and the lavish life-styles of the urban politicos; they justified living high off the hog by arguing that union officials had to put up a good show when they bargained with well-heeled businessmen.

Dan Tobin's rise from a Cambridge horsecar driver to the presidency of the International Brotherhood of Teamsters (IBT) personified the successful route local business agents took to power and influence. Tobin was born in Ireland and raised in Cambridge, where he drove a three-horse tram for $11 per 66-hour week. Soon he moved on to Boston where he drove a streetcar, joined the Knights of Labor, and then became a driver-salesman, suggesting the entrepreneurial quality that would characterize many business agents. From his wagon Tobin sold butter, cheese, eggs, tea, coffee, cocoa, and coal. He also won a city contract to sprinkle the streets, the product of a friendship with an Irish ward boss. In 1900 Dan Tobin joined the Boston local of the Teamsters' Union. In 1903, the businesslike young man was elected as one of Local 25's delegates to the union national convention. After returning from the convention, he ambitiously declared his candidacy for the post of business agent of Local 25, one of the largest AFL locals in the east. He lost. But he ran again a year later, and after becoming a business agent, Tobin launched a remarkably successful career as a union official. In 1906, Local 25's new business agent proposed that the IBT national convention meet in Boston. His motion passed, and when the convention opened in August of 1907 Tobin had already become president of the Teamsters, Chauffeurs, Warehousemen and Helpers District Joint Council No. 10. Tobin was clearly a man on the make, but it was a surprise to many when he was elected national president of the Teamsters' Union at the Boston convention in 1907, replacing another Cambridge Irishman, Cornelius Shea.

By 1910, Tobin had eliminated his opposition, and from that point until 1952 he was the Teamsters' unchallenged president. Tobin consolidated his administration by dealing roughly with potential rebels and rivals, by tightly managing the IBT treasury, and by sticking to conservative craft unionism, avoiding sympathy strikes, and jealously guarding the Teamsters' jurisdiction over certain groups of workers. A conservative Catholic Democrat who knew that most political organizations worked on graft, Tobin concerned himself less

AFL leadership in the 1920's: Dan Tobin of the Teamsters', left front row, standing next to Samuel Gompers

with eliminating gangsterism than with stamping out radicalism, which flared up in the Midwest after the Minneapolis general strike of 1934. The subsequent administrations of Beck, Hoffa, and Fitzsimmons have been so filled with corruption and repression that Tobin's years as president seem like a golden era; but Dan Tobin set up the bureaucratic and autocratic forms that have allowed his successors to rule undemocratically at both national and local levels.

The benefits of business unionism for individuals like Tobin were clear, and they were clear to many workers who were lucky enough to enjoy the protection of AFL craft unions. In a relative sense, these workers were a privileged strata of the working class, if not an aristocracy of labor.

During the early 1900s, in fact, labor unions grew to include more of Boston's workers than ever before. Through federal labor unions attached to AFL locals and through new industrial unions, especially in the needle trades, some unskilled workers won union representation. In 1913 there were 350 AFL locals affiliated with the Boston Central Labor Union, which claimed an impressive membership of 96,621 workers. Even at this high point, though, thousands of unskilled women, black, and immigrant workers remained unorganized and unprotected, partly as a result of the AFL's limited craft union approach.

Even women with union protection earned only $6.00 to $16.00 a week. Telephone operators who belonged to the Electrical Workers Union earned only $12.00 a week after two years on the job. In other words, unions won women higher wages than their nonunion sisters in the sweatshops, but union women still earned much less than their union brothers. Unions did little to narrow the wage differential based on sex. As members of Boston's printing trades, men earned $21.00 a week, while women earned only $9.00 per week for doing the same work. At that time few raised the issue of equal pay for equal work, which has become a goal for 9 to 5, Boston's current organization of women office workers. The issue in the early 1900s was whether women would be allowed to organize into trade unions. Since 37 percent of the city's women worked for wages in this period—

Women's Trade Union League demonstration

a larger proportion than in any other city—female workers represented a vast, unorganized sector of the working class.

The Women's Trade Union League (WTUL), founded in Boston at Faneuil Hall in 1903, pushed the AFL to organize women. Headed by Mabel Gillespie, a resident of the Denison House, the Boston WTUL grew slowly at first, attracting some interest among woman suffragists, socialists such as Vida Scudder (also of Denison House), and other professionals—women such as Dr. Emily Greene Balch of Wellesley, later awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Although the WTUL continued to encounter resistance from male union leaders, it grew significantly after intervening in the Roxbury carpet-weavers' strike of 1910. By 1911 the Boston League claimed 425 members, including 275 female trade union-

Mabel Gillespie, head of the Boston Women's Trade Union League
Source: Schlesinger Library, Radcliffe College

Mary Kenney O'Sullivan of the Boston Women's Trade Union League

ists and 150 professional allies.

However, after ten years of pressuring the AFL to organize women workers, just 8,089 females belonged to Boston unions—only about 8 percent of the city's overall union membership. As a result, many WTUL activists turned instead to agitating for more protective legislation. The famous 1908 Supreme Court decision won by Boston attorney Louis D. Brandeis opened the door for more female factory reforms by arguing that women needed the protection of the state because they were weaker than men; this precedent, seen as a progressive development in 1908, later proved to be an obstacle to struggles for equal pay and equal rights generally.

The Lawrence textile strike of 1912, involving thousands of immigrant women, heightened tensions within the WTUL between those who wanted to continue to pressure the AFL and those who believed the Federation and its President, Samuel Gompers, were hostile to organizing women.* The militant strike for "bread and roses" at Lawrence made Gompers very uncomfortable. First, it was started by unskilled immigrant workers, divided

*In fact, after the Lawrence strike Gompers, who believed that a "woman's place" was "in the home," announced that the Federation would no longer support the WTUL because the AFL constitution forbade contributions to "outside" organizations. Only the pressure of wartime conditions which brought thousands of women into industrial jobs in 1918 and 1919 forced Gompers to take action. It was during the war that he appointed the AFL's first full-time woman organizer, Mary Kenney O'Sullivan of the Boston WTUL.

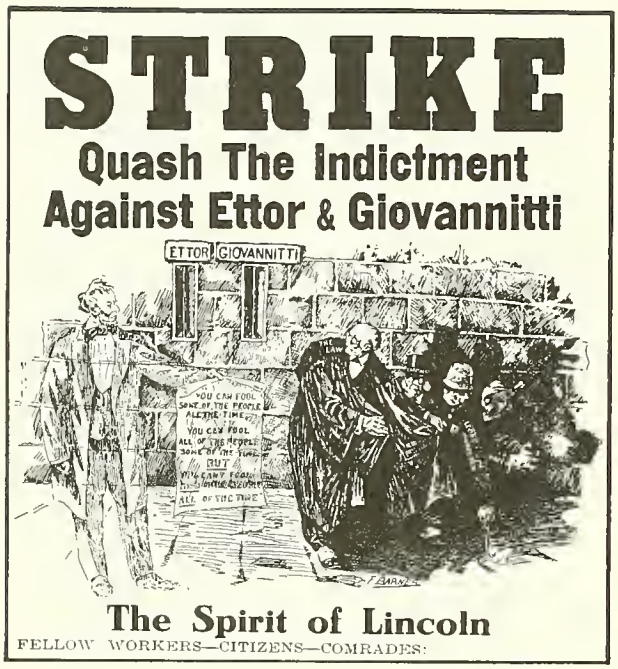
into many different nationalities, and it involved large numbers of militant women strikers. These were the very groups the AFL leaders dismissed as incapable of organization. In fact, the Lawrence mill workers organized themselves very rapidly and effectively into locals of the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), a revolutionary organization committed to organizing all workers into "one big union." The presence of IWW organizers, like Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the "Rebel Girl," and "Big Bill" Haywood, was the second reason for Sam Gompers's discomfort. These radical organizers or "Wobblies" were outspoken opponents of AFL craft unionism and bitter critics of business unions.

Because so many women workers were involved in the highly publicized Lawrence strike, the struggle became an issue for the Boston chapter of the Women's Trade Union League. The AFL textile workers' union in Lawrence, totally discredited by the IWW during the strike, ordered the WTUL to stay out of the city. Certain leaders of the Boston chapter accepted this order, and Robert Woods, one of the key supporters of the Boston WTUL, actually criticized the strikers for joining the IWW. Many of the women organizers at Denison House found it impossible to remain loyal to the AFL under the circumstances. Vida Scudder traveled to Lawrence to speak with the striking Italian workers, whose language she had learned while helping to organize the Circolo-Italo-Americano, "an organization offering opportunity for Americans to know their Italian neighbors and to build civic and national spirit among Italians." Scudder was then attacked in the Boston press along with Wellesley College colleague Ellen Hayes for spreading radicalism, and asked not to return to Denison House. Sue Anislie Clark wrote that "many of those in power in the A.F. of L. today seem to be selfish, reactionary and remote from the struggle for bread and liberty of the unskilled workers." Mary Kenney O'Sullivan reported that that the Lawrence strikers "came to look upon the Federation as almost as dangerous to their success as the force of the employers themselves."

Top leadership at the WTUL took a critical view toward the AFL after the Lawrence strike, but refused to abandon the Federation. Following the strike, Elizabeth Glendower Evans, an important ally and executive member of the Boston WTUL, wrote the national president that "the immediate results of the I.W.W. victories . . . are new hope in the labor world. But its program is destructive." The One Big Union, she wrote, was a "scourge" visited upon the AFL for the sins of "strict craft organization" which excluded "the unskilled foreign races."

Unskilled foreign-born workers throughout the country were electrified by the victory of the Lawrence textile workers, whose numbers included over twenty different nationalities. IWW propaganda and organization, led by Elizabeth Gurley Flynn, the daughter of Irish revolutionaries, appeared in several different languages. Most of all, the strike for "bread and roses" in Lawrence disproved the AFL charge that foreign, unskilled workers, especially women, were unorganizable. Italian immigrants, the largest group of strikers, were particularly aroused by the event. Mass protests took place around the country when Lawrence police arrested three top organizers on trumped-up murder charges; they were Joseph

Joseph Caruso, Joe Ettor, and Arturo Giovanitti after arrest in Lawrence, 1912
Source: UPI



Poster protesting the indictment of Ettor and Giovanitti

Ettor, Brooklyn-born IWW organizer of Italian descent; Arturo Giovanitti, an Italian poet and writer who, as head of the Italian Socialist Federation, came to Lawrence to organize relief for the strikers and their families; and Joseph Caruso, an Italian anarchist, one of the militants who initiated the strike before the IWW appeared on the scene. (Fifteen years later two other Italian anarchists, Bartolomeo Vanzetti and Nicola Sacco, who were inspired by the Lawrence strike, were executed on a similar charge after a much larger international defense movement failed to save their lives.)

In Quincy, Massachusetts, where there was a large Italian colony of quarry workers, Gilda Mazzarella founded an IWW local just before the Ettor-Giovanitti trial, and allied with Finnish socialists to shut down the stone works for a day to protest the frame-up. In Boston, Italian Wobblies formed a marble-workers' local in 1913, and on May Day of that year called a general strike, which was supported by the Italians in the trade. The strikers won a substantial raise, but the IWW locals in Boston "soon disappeared when other AFL building trade unionists refused to work beside the Wobblies." The IWW had little success in Boston, because they found that the city's most militant workers in the building trades and garment shops were under the jurisdiction of AFL locals. The Wobblies were most successful in the east among immigrant workers in large, single-industry cities. With its heterogeneity of trades, well-developed craft unions, and well-oiled patronage machine, Boston was not fertile turf for the IWW.

In the twentieth century, the Italians developed their own patronage machines and labor unions. Because Italian immigrants were Boston's largest and poorest of the new groups, they had great difficulty finding jobs. Many depended on a *padrone*, or labor contractor, who found construction and gang labor for them, and took a percentage of their pay as a commission. Others formed mutual aid societies to ameliorate the brutal housing and working conditions. In fact, Boston's Italian immigrants founded over 100 mutual aid societies by 1910.

Dominic D'Alessandro, head of the Hodcarriers Union
Source: Laborers' International Union

In 1898, a striking character named Dominic D'Alessandro arrived in Boston from a village near Rome. An ambitious man, D'Alessandro founded his own benevolent society, and through this he established a small bank. In 1904, he allied with George Scigliano, a North End politician who was seeking legislation against the *padroni,* and together, they formed a union for Italian laborers. It was a curious union. Besides D'Alessandro, who listed himself as bricklayer and banker, the officers included two attorneys and three funeral directors, notably G. A. Langone. James Lombardi, a socialist union member, objected to the presence of these petty bourgeois elements. So did D. D. Driscoll, the president of the Central Labor Union. Only when the *prominenti* withdrew from the official leadership of the Italian labor union did Driscoll allow D'Alessandro's organization to receive an official AFL charter.

The Italian Laborers Union, a community institution, grew rapidly after it received its AFL charter. The Irish-dominated Boston Building Trades' Council supported the union because it spelled the end of contract labor and the *padroni.* D'Alessandro, president and business agent of the local, negotiated affiliation with the Italian Hod Carriers' Union. He also organized other locals of Italians, and later engineered the merger of Irish and Italian hod carriers' locals. Tensions between the two groups remained high for years, but a basis for cooperation now existed.

D'Alessandro not only copied the business agent's tactics in the AFL, he also took a leaf from Honey Fitz's book by joining with various *prominenti* in founding an Italian Benevolent Aid Society through which newly arrived immigrants could find jobs. D'Alessandro met immigrants when they came—a new *padrone* replacing the old contractor—and when they returned to Italy, as an immigrant banker. By 1908, he was officially and ceremoniously recognized by the Italian government. At the same time he was elected president of the hod carriers and sent about to organize locals.

D'Alessandro ran the union in a rather high-handed manner. Neither he nor his successors called a convention between 1911 and 1941. After 1910, the *Official Journal* was suspended and with it, writes historian Edwin Fenton, "went a magnificent opportunity to educate thousands of Italo-Americans. Since the union was steadily increasing in strength through these years, only a lack of interest in the affairs of the union by the members and indifference on the part of the officials can explain this unusual condition. Yet thousands of Italo-Americans belonged to this union, many of them no doubt almost ignorant of American ways." Fenton continues:

> Here the difference between D'Alessandro, a former petty banker with no roots in the labor movement abroad, and the leaders of the bricklayers or the garment workers becomes evident. Luigi Mazzola, the Bellanca brothers, Salvatore Ninfo, and other socialists who formed the driving force behind the New York City Italian-American labor movement looked on unionism as a preparation for a finer life. Once they severed their connection with revolutionary movements, they devoted time and energy to education, political agitation, and the fight against totalitarianism of both the left and right. Without their philosophic background, D'Alessandro lacked the motivation to emulate them. He must have devoted many of the later years of his life to his increasing fortune. Although his salary was always small, he left a fortune of about $200,000 when he died in 1926.

By 1914 the bosses, most of them Irish, were firmly established in the Democratic party and the AFL unions of Boston. Their position had changed over the years, however. At first the Irish ward heeler and the Italian *padrone* had provided for the immigrant's most basic need: a job. The patronage pol also fulfilled other needs for his constituents—springing offenders from jail, providing destitute families with food that was not tainted with charity, lobbying for urban legislation in the statehouse, winning contracts for his district in city hall, and occasionally representing his constituency in elected office. Yankee reformers tried to undercut the power of these bosses by introducing at-large elections in place of ward-based

elections; this reform would presumably allow the "best and the brightest" from the professional and business classes to win out over corrupt ward heelers. At-large elections did deprive some of the smaller ethnic groups of representation on the city council or school committee, but they did not restrain the Irish for long. Following Curley's example, they developed multi-ward organizations and defeated their Yankee opponents in most city-wide elections. Ignoring the functional role played by the patronage boss in the immigrant community, the reformers concentrated entirely on moralistic appeals and speeches about efficiency and honesty, while the bosses continued to make materialistic appeals to voters, based on the need for economic security.

The ward bosses and union business agents served as middlemen between the Boston working class, whose basic economic needs they helped to fulfill, and the employing class, whose need for cheap labor they helped to fulfill. As middlemen, the ward heelers and the business agents could benefit in several ways. Some could use their political influence to advance their own businesses or to start new ones. In other words, ward bosses who became city officials (or influenced city officials) could help their own businesses or their friends' businesses by influencing licensing, taxing, policing, and other forms of services provided by the city. Similarly, business agents in the building trades could sometimes become building contractors. If they were close to Democratic party officeholders, they could use their influence in city hall to win contracts for their firms. Corruption was often involved, and, as Lincoln Steffens showed in *The Shame of the Cities*, this corruption usually involved businessmen bribing city officials. However, many political and union bosses could prosper and help their friends prosper without flagrantly violating the law.

As Steve Miller points out in his study, "The Boston Irish Political Machines," the old organizations remained firmly rooted in local neighborhood committees run by patronage czars such as Martin Lomasney. By 1900 the localistic patronage machines were imprisoning aspiring Irishmen, especially the skilled workers who relied upon trade unions instead of ward organizations to win their jobs and protect them. "Irish liquor dealers, shop-keepers, grocers, retail merchants, and construction contractors" also wanted more independence from the parasitic local boss, who still took the same cut for services he was no longer as able to render. Furthermore, the old machine system encouraged bitter warfare among the Irish bosses and excluded the newer immigrants, except on a token basis. This situation was untenable for a new-style boss such as James Michael Curley. To win as mayor in 1913, he set up a city-wide machine based largely on his own charisma, a machine that incorporated many trade unions and ward machines and eclipsed those who opposed him. Curley's organization was predominantly Irish, but unlike earlier bosses he made an effort to integrate other immigrant groups, especially those previously ignored by the old ward machines.

Curley, who was more conscious than the ward bosses of the needs expressed by the labor movement, did deliver some of the goods to his working-class constituents. He expanded the public job sector even if it meant taxing or otherwise offending the city's businessmen and bankers, who made no secret of their hatred for James Michael. As William Shannon writes of Curley in his book *The American Irish*: "He was the idol of a cult . . . and the spokesman for a state of mind."

Curley's "stunning victory" in 1913 over a powerful coalition of Yankee professionals, businessmen, and good-government reformers revealed a discontent with politics as usual. "The majority of the voters wanted something more striking, more dramatic" than the conservative businessmen who had often occupied city hall, "something more expressive and emotionally satisfying than the stale and wearisome round of musical chairs which the old-style ward bosses had been playing for thirty years." Curley gave them something different. As Shannon observes:

> He had the ruthlessness, the style, the gift for the memorable phrase, and an utter unscrupulousness about means that enabled him to dominate the scene. He personalized all community problems, centered all conflicts around himself

and had such a grand sense of himself as the protagonist and prototype of his people that countless Bostonians leading drab work-a-day lives were able to identify with him and find release and vicarious satisfaction. The more he was attacked, the more they loved him. The more he exacerbated Irish-Yankee antagonisms, the more he vented repressed sentiments and hatreds.

Shannon's language certainly implies that if it had not been for the rise of Curley through the political-business system the "repressed sentiments and hatreds" of working-class Bostonians might have found more dangerous outlets. Despite his personal feud with William Cardinal O'Connell, Curley was a staunch Catholic and a virulent anti-socialist. In his autobiography, he clearly stated that his role included a defense of the system against radical critics. Despite his colorful attacks on the Yankee elite, he never threatened private ownership of property, the private pursuit of profit, or the tradition of the free labor contract. The privatism of bosses such as Curley, D'Alessandro, and Tobin was much closer to the capitalism of the Yankee entrepreneurs than it was to the socialism of the labor militants such as George McNeill, champion of the eight-hour day and the Cooperative Commonwealth, or Peter J. McGuire, who fought for class-conscious, democratic unionism in the Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners. Both of these old radicals died in 1906, at a time when Tobin, the new kind of business agent, and Curley, the new kind of political boss, were beginning their ascendancy.

6

Boston's Workers in the Troubled Years, 1919 – 1929

World War I was a traumatic experience for the soldiers who fought in Europe and for the folks at home. The war created jobs. But the war also created hysteria and paranoia, which led to race riots and "red raids" in 1919-1920, and then to the ordeal of Sacco and Vanzetti.

Like the Civil War before it and World War II to follow, World War I created some favorable conditions for labor. One of the ironies of United States economic history is that wars create jobs for workers who stay at home. Wartime has usually been the occasion when the unemployment characteristic of capitalism has been reduced sufficiently to allow workers to bargain effectively with employers. Of course, capitalists profit far more from wars than do workers—and World War I was no exception. Congressional charges of war profiteering were leveled primarily against arms dealers—the "merchants of death"—but the charges also applied to food and clothing manufacturers and others who made windfall profits during the wartime boom.

Like other retail and commercial centers, Boston benefited from the First World War. Unemployment, which had risen as high as 30 percent, virtually disappeared. AFL unions took advantage of the situation to organize new locals, notably among unskilled workers who were employed in the garment industry and in municipal jobs. The American Federation of Labor pledged not to strike for the duration of the war, in return for various forms of protection from the federal government through Woodrow Wilson's National War Labor Board. AFL President Samuel Gompers, who became a leading agent of Wilson's foreign policy, was pleased to see federal and state government suppression of socialist opposition within the Federation and of Industrial Workers of the World opposition outside the Federation. Both socialists and Wobblies opposed World War I as a conflict between capitalist, imperialist powers which were seeking control of markets throughout the world. For criticizing the war and opposing conscription, both organizations were suppressed in 1917 and 1918: their newspapers were suspended, their leaders arrested, and their supporters harassed and intimidated.

The war years were difficult for Boston's labor militants. Italian anarchists, who had organized several "groupos" in the Boston area, were also radically opposed to the war. In 1917, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, who had been involved in a strike at the Plymouth cordage factory, and Nicola Sacco, who had agitated in an equally serious strike at a Hopedale, Massachusetts, iron foundry, joined anarchist comrades in Mexico. Sacco and Vanzetti fled America not only to avoid conscription, but also to prepare for a return to Italy once the war had ended, when revolutionary conditions seemed likely to develop.

Working-class militancy took explosive forms during the war. In 1916, this militancy reached its prewar peak as 1.6 million workers participated in strikes or lockouts. In 1919, strikes reached an unprecedented level as 4.2 million workers joined in industrial action. A general strike in Seattle was followed by large-scale strikes of clothing and steel workers, and it seemed as though the U.S. might be on the brink of revolution. Louis C. Fraina, a young socialist who edited *Revolutionary Age* in Boston, wrote in 1918 that the militant strikes of unskilled workers in this period signaled an awakening of "mass action" by the "machine proletariat," which would sweep occupational differences aside.

There was an upsurge of union organizing among Irish municipal workers between 1916 and 1919. The municipal workers' strikes represented Irish working-class efforts to win wage increases to offset the skyrocketing cost of living. Many city workers received jobs and promotions through patronage bosses, but with James Michael Curley out of office, they had to rely upon their own resources to challenge a Yankee, Republican government that had usurped many of Boston's home-rule powers. These strikes were more radical in their implications than strikes in the private sector because public employees, especially the police force, were relied on to keep the system running and to protect private property.

In 1912, the newly formed Boston Carmen's Union struck against the Boston Elevated Company. The Elevated imported scabs from other cities—causing some violence—in order to break the Carmen's strike, but the union won out; it gained recognition from the Elevated Company, but won no wage or hour demands. In 1919, when the union numbered approximately six thousand members, carmen went on strike against the Elevated because of long working days and low pay. Until the 1919 strike, workers were expected to work a seven-day week, ten hours a day, with no vacations, fringe benefits, or holidays. Pay averaged $17.00 per week.

One of the most important strikes of 1919 occurred among Boston's telephone operators. During World War I, the federal government placed the telephone system under the control of Postmaster General Albert S. Burleson. World War I ended in October, 1918, but Burleson retained control over the phone system into 1919. Throughout late 1918, Julia O'Connor, head of the telephone operators' union, tried to learn whether jurisdictional power to negotiate with the union rested with the phone company, the War Labor Board, or the postmaster general's office. Specifically, O'Connor wanted to know whether the phone company or a government agency had the power to negotiate a contract that included higher pay and improved working conditions for the operators.

On December 31, 1918, the phone operators' contract expired. In February, 1919, the operators' union voted to strike on April 15 if Postmaster General Burleson had not designated the phone company, the War Labor Board, or his office as the unit with the expressed power to negotiate a contract with the operators' union. Between February and April Julia O'Connor and the operators planned the strike, and by April 15, they had developed a number of tactics for the well-organized union to publicize its grievance and to hold Postmaster General Burleson up to public ridicule.

By April 15, 1919, Burleson had not assigned the powers to negotiate either to the phone company or to a government agency, so the Boston operators struck tying up service in Massachusetts, Rhode Island, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Male cable-splicers and electricians of the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers joined with and supported the operators' union during the strike. Such was the public uproar at the collapse of telephone service, and the solidarity among telephone company employees—male and female—that Postmaster General Burleson sent Assistant Postmaster General Koons to Boston to negotiate a contract with the operators' union. The strike ended on April 22, 1919.

Rose Norwood recalled how the operators organized to win their wage demands in an earlier strike in 1912. "I first got involved in the Women's Trade Union League when I worked for the telephone company, earning the big sum of $6.10 a week," she remarks. "A group of toll operators decided they wanted to form a union because wages and conditions were bad. The telephone company enforced a military discipline. We couldn't whisper; we had to sit still all day. They'd fire a woman if she were five minutes late. They made her stay in a retiring room a half hour, until she lost her pay. They punished us. So, it was important to have a union." The operators first went to the Women's Educational & Industrial Union to discuss organizing a union. Then the operators learned of Mabel Gillespie at the Women's Trade Union League. Gillespie helped the operators to organize and facilitated affiliation with the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. A good number of operators turned out for an organizational meeting of the union at Wells Memorial Hall in

Telephone operators on strike in 1919
Source: Boston *Globe*

the South End, the headquarters of Boston's noted Workingmen's Club, founded in 1880. Once established, the operators helped to organize cleaning women in telephone-company buildings, and to distribute literature to others who worked for the phone company.

By 1919, there were six thousand operators in the union. As Rose Norwood remembered, "I worked in Chinatown on Oxford Street. The Chinese were wonderful during the strike. They put a long table against the door so that the company could not bring strike breakers in through the back entrance. They said, 'We keep scabs out.' We were out for more than a week. The strike was successful. When we went back to work, we got back pay, better wages, and better hours. After that, they put cafeterias in some of the exchanges and we got food at cost."

The Boston police strike, which followed in the fall of 1919, was the most unusual strike in Bos-

Boston police officers, carrying their uniforms leave police station in civilian clothes at the start of the 1919 police strike
Source: Boston *Globe*

ton's history. John Cadigan, one of the veterans of the Boston police strike, commented on police grievances:

> By 1919 Boston Democrats were blossoming into authority and their strength was growing. Boston was in a unique position: its police department was controlled by the state government, which was solidly Republican. The superintendent was appointed by the city, the city paid all salaries and the bills, but the real boss of the police department was the state commissioner. The Republicans wanted to keep control of the police department.
>
> The day crew came on at 8:00 a.m. and worked until 6:00 p.m. At six o'clock a crew came on and worked the first half of the night, until 1:00 a.m. The other shift was from 1:00 a.m. to 8:00 a.m. Once every two weeks, after a man finished his tour of duty at 1 o'clock, he stayed and slept at the station house for the next seven hours, in case any extra policemen were needed. But he wasn't paid for it. That was one of the things we wanted to change.
>
> There were other complaints. We wanted increased wages. . . . Conditions in some of the station houses were very poor. Also, if a man had to testify in court about an arrest in the daytime, he went to district court the next day and maybe hung around all day. He wasn't paid extra for that. If he were a night man, forget about his getting paid at all for going to court. Clothing was an issue, too. All they gave us besides our uniform was a raincoat. We were not provided with rubbers or even a rain hat. We wanted more fringe benefits like these.

In June of 1919, the AFL reversed its policy and started to grant charters to police unions. Boston firefighters and library workers had already organized, and city hall clerks had formed an AFL local. The Policeman's Social Club hummed with talk of unionization. On August 9, 1919, the AFL's New England organizer, Frank McCarthy, responded positively to the Social Club's request for a union charter. Edwin Upton Curtis, appointed by Governor Calvin Coolidge as commissioner of Boston's predominantly Irish police force, then issued an edict that forbade unionization for city police, who were said to be "state officers," not "employees."

On August 15 the police, disregarding Curtis's order, gathered at Fay Hall in the South End and formed a union. On August 17, the Boston Central Labor Union held its largest meeting in a decade. "The mood was militant," writes Francis Russell in his history of the police strike. "A delegate introduced a carefully prepared resolution denouncing Curtis's actions as 'a tyrannical assumption of autocratic authority . . . foreign to the principle of government under which we live.' . . . The delegate congratulated the police for their courage in asserting their rights, promised 'every atom of support that labor can bring to bear,' and bade 'a hearty welcome to the Policemen's Union to the ranks of organized labor.'"

Conflict between Commissioner Curtis and the policemen escalated through August into Septem-

ber. Late in August, eleven patrolmen were charged with violating Curtis's antiunion rule. An investigation was launched. James Storrow, who had been narrowly defeated by Fitzgerald for mayor in 1909, headed the investigating commission. He was no friend of labor. On September 8, Curtis suspended nineteen police officers who were union activists. When police voted to strike by the overwhelming margin of 1,134 to 2, one of the most notorious strikes in United States history began, a strike in which Boston's finest—its Irish-Catholic defenders of law and order—were accused of bringing bolshevism to Boston!

Much is made of the rioting that resulted during the strike, but property damage was far less than the estimates originally claimed by property owners. "The life of the city went on much as usual," writes Francis Russell in his sensationally titled book, *A City in Terror.* Using "green guardsmen" to patrol the streets and to protect property, the commonwealth quelled disturbances by force. South Boston was a center of much rioting and looting. Guardsmen fired on a crowd, killing three and wounding eight. Russell offers the following explanation:

> As in the Boston Massacre a century and a half earlier, when British troops had been baited into firing into a menacing mob on State Street, no one could say later who gave the order to fire. Captain Hadley denied that he had given it. Possibly—even as in that earlier confrontation —someone in the mob had called out the command in derision. Possibly a green young guardsman, fearful of the onrushing mass, had opened fire on his own and his fellows had copied him. But however fatal the result, it ended all disturbances in South Boston. The guardsmen, continuing their advance with rifles at the shoulder, encountered only fleeing individuals, whose belligerency had collapsed like a pricked balloon. 'The firing,' Adjutant General Stevens wrote smugly in his report, 'had a salutory effect; it cowed the mob.'

Violence hurt the policemen's cause. John Cadigan, who participated in the strike, thinks that Governor Coolidge deliberately withheld troops until violence had occurred. "To this day, no one has explained what became of the men the city had lined up and why Coolidge didn't send the militia onto the streets," Cadigan told Sari Roboff: "During the strike, hired goons on Washington Street started crap games. There were just a few agitators. Businessmen left nothing of value in their store windows, but the goons broke their windows and pandemonium reigned. They ordered the militia out the next night. Then, about three days later, Coolidge called in the National Guard." Cadigan continued, "What really burnt everybody up was the rioting. Public opinion turned against the policemen just because the public didn't have all the facts. The people thought that the policemen had left the city helpless. It was not the union's fault that men were not on the street. There were about 1,500 guardsmen, militia men, and volunteers stationed in the area. Now, that isn't leaving a city helpless. Why didn't they put them in there? Why weren't the militia ordered out? The Mayor of Boston had been assured months in advance that if the police struck, the state had the militia."

Coolidge emerged from the strike as a politician of national stature. He became a hero to the panic-stricken upper and middle classes by issuing this statement: "There is no right to strike against the public safety anywhere, any time." Actually, "Silent Cal" acted cautiously by refusing to commit himself further until he was sure that the police would lose their strike.

The Boston Policemen's Union lost not only because public opinion turned against the striking officers, but because other AFL workers refused to strike in sympathy. Initially several unions, including the firefighters, streetcar operators, and telephone operators, expressed willingness to engage in a general strike. At the height of the police strike, the Boston Central Labor Union met and President O'Donnell polled the delegates secretly on a sympathy strike: 80 percent supported it.*

*Of the firefighters, 85 percent favored the police strike. One hundred percent of the thirty thousand members of the United Hebrew Trades supported the police union's strike, even though their members—the tailors in 1913, the garment workers in 1916—had been beaten and arrested by the boys in blue.

O'Donnell and BCLU leaders decided to keep the results secret. At the national level, AFL President Gompers feared losing control to militants in 1919, to that point the most strike-prone year in United States history. Frightened by the Seattle general strike earlier in the year, Gompers worked behind the scenes to prevent a general strike in Boston. As a result, the various unions that had pledged to support the police backed down, and made victory impossible for the police union.

The Boston Central Labor Union, which represented over a hundred thousand workers in 1919, could probably have turned the tide in the policemen's favor, but the BCLU leaders (who shared Samuel Gompers's conservative views) discouraged militant trade unionists, who had struck no less than forty times in the month preceding the policemen's walkout. As AFL leaders stalled for almost two weeks and watched public opinion turn against the police, the rank and file may have questioned their solidarity with the blue-coated servants of law and order, the protectors of capitalist property. In any case, the erosion of general strike support doomed the police. Commissioner Curtis recruited an entire new police force to replace the defeated strikers. The strikebreakers were hired from the ranks of unemployed war veterans.

Boston paid a big price for refusing to recognize the policemen's union. "From being one of the most respected police forces in the country," Francis Russell writes, "the Boston Police Department after 1919 became one of the least, often accused—according to the candid admission of its own commissioner—of corruption, dishonesty, and inefficiency." The defeat of the Boston police strike also set back the development of police unions (since many cities copied Boston's law prohibiting such unionization), and it retarded the growth of public-employee unions generally.

The police strike erupted in the midst of the worst Red scare in United States history to date. This created the context for the incredible charges that the Hub's men in blue were Bolsheviks. There were supporters of the Russian Revolution in Boston, but they were not among the police; in fact, they were victims of police truncheons when they conducted a revolutionary march on May Day, 1919. That march was led by the Lettish Foreign Language Federation of the Boston Socialist party. (The Letts were the most active supporters of the Bolsheviks in the Socialist party of America.) In addition to immigrants from Latvia, the march attracted Lithuanians, Russians, and even some Irish-Americans, who were radicalized by the 1916 Easter Uprising and the writing of martyred Marxist James Connolly.

The Lettish Federation supported an appropriately titled publication, *Revolutionary Age*, edited in Boston by a protege of Daniel DeLeon's. In one of its first issues, editor Louis Fraina published V.I. Lenin's "Letter to American Workingmen." Lenin wrote: "We know it may take a long time before help can come from you, comrades . . . for the development of the revolution in the various countries proceeds along various paths." Fraina and his Lettish comrades decided to quicken the pace down the revolutionary path with a May Day demonstration in Boston.

However, the 1919 demonstration provoked more in the way of reaction than revolution. The leaders of the demonstration, which numbered fifteen hundred workers, had no permit, and the police immediately ordered the group to stop near Dudley Street Station. Marchers refused to halt, and shouted, "To hell with the permit!" A riot broke out among police, bystanders, and marchers. Police tried to wrest control of red flags from the marchers, who fought to hold their ground. Three policemen and one civilian were wounded, and another civilian was stabbed mortally. News of the riot spread to other sections of the city, and crowds harassed the marchers. A mob demolished the Winona Street headquarters of the Boston Socialist party. Police arrested 116 marchers, who were charged with rioting and refusing arrest. Fourteen of the marchers were found guilty and sentenced to prison terms of six to eighteen months. All were socialists.

Meanwhile, at the national level, mail bombs were sent to various powerful figures, including John D. Rockefeller and J. P. Morgan; Postmaster General Burleson, who banned radical literature from the mails; and Attorney General A. Mitchell Palmer, who was using the Red scare to advance

his political career. Anarchists were generally blamed for the bombings, and so Boston's Italian anarchists (including Sacco and Vanzetti, whose newspaper was suspended) were placed on the "wanted" list of the Department of Justice's new anti-Red squad, which was headed by an ambitious young man named J. Edgar Hoover. Ironically, at the height of the Red scare the radical movement was weakened and fragmented by a split between socialists and communists.

The federal government began an enormous roundup of radicals initiated by Palmer and carried out with Hoover's help. On January 2, 1920, federal and state officials arrested more than four thousand suspected radicals in thirty-three major cities and twenty-three states. The raids hit most local communist organizations. Practically every leader of the movement, national or local, was put under arrest. Federal authorities made many arrests without warrants. Prisoners were often held incommunicado, and deprived of their right to legal counsel. Federal authorities incarcerated aliens, and scheduled deportation hearings. Suspected radicals, who were American citizens, were handed over to state officials for prosecution under state syndicalist laws.

In New England, the federal government and state authorities conducted raids in Boston, Chelsea, Brockton, Nashua, Manchester, and Portsmouth. Approximately eight hundred persons were seized in the raids, and about half were taken to Deer Island in Boston Harbor. "In this shifting process, the prisoners were forced to march in chains from the immigrant station to the dock—a fact which newspapers played up as attesting to their dangerous, violent character," writes Robert K. Murray in *Red Scare*. "Upon arriving at Deer Island the prisoners found conditions deplorable; heat was lacking, sanitation was poor, and restrictions holding them incommunicado were rigidly enforced. One captive plunged five stories to his death, another went insane, and two others died of pneumonia."

On May 2, 1920, Andrea Salsedo, an anarchist editor arrested in the raids, died after "falling" from a fourteen-story window in the New York City Department of Justice office. Salsedo had been held incommunicado for over a month by federal agents, who interrogated him about his connection with another Italian anarchist, who was alleged to have blown himself up while trying to plant a bomb at Attorney General Palmer's house. Anarchists believed that Salsedo had been pushed from the Justice Department office.

Anarchists had been very active in labor actions in and around Boston before the war. Their newspaper, *Cronaca Sovversiva (Chronicle of Subversion)*, published in Lynn, was high on the list of publications that the federal government suppressed. The *Groupo Autonomo* anarchist collective in East Boston sent one of their members, Bartolomeo Vanzetti, to New York to investigate Salsedo's arrest. Vanzetti warned his East Boston comrades that a federal net was closing in on them. Upon learning of Salsedo's death, Vanzetti and other anarchists, including Nicola Sacco, armed themselves and prepared for arrest and deportation.

The Palmer raids and the death of Salsedo were very much on the minds of Sacco and Vanzetti when they were arrested in Bridgewater on May 5, 1920. The two men had gone to pick up a car to assist in moving anarchist literature to safer quarters. This was twenty days after an armed robbery at a South Braintree shoe factory in which the paymaster and the guard were killed. Sacco and Vanzetti were arrested for this robbery. In 1921, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts convicted them of the crime, and in 1927 the commonwealth executed them.

Felix Frankfurter pointed out in his 1927 study of the Sacco and Vanzetti case that the two anarchists were actually convicted on the basis of their behavior at the time of arrest. When they were arrested, they lied about their activities in order to avoid prosecution as anarchists. Their conduct with the police on the evening of their arrest played a crucial role in the controversial trial. So many witnesses contradicted the prosecution's contention that Sacco and Vanzetti were present at the scene of the crime that Judge Webster Thayer—who boasted to a friend that he would really get those "anarchist bastards"—had to abandon the identification of Sacco and Vanzetti as the ground upon which the jury's verdict rested. Thayer dis-

Vanzetti and Sacco
Source: Boston *Globe*

missed all of the contradictory testimony from eyewitnesses. "The evidence that convicted these defendents," Thayer wrote, "was circumstantial and was evidence that is known in law as 'consciousness of guilt.'" Frankfurter, later a Supreme Court justice, showed that by "consciousness of guilt" Judge Thayer meant that Sacco and Vanzetti's behavior after April 15 [the date of the South Braintree robbery] was the behavior of murderers. This inference of guilt was drawn from their conduct on the night of May 5, before and after their arrest, and from their possession of firearms.

Frankfurter went on to argue that the commonwealth had no evidence to prove that Sacco and Vanzetti had previous contacts with robbers, nor did the prosecution prove that they had any money from the robbery, or that they altered their behavior after the holdup. "Not at all!" Frankfurter concluded. "Neither of these men had ever been accused of crime before their arrest. Nor, during the three weeks between the murder and their arrest, did they behave like men who were concealing the crime of murder. They did not go into hiding; they did not abscond with the spoils; they did not live under assumed names. On the contrary they maintained their old lodgings; they pursued openly their callings, within a few miles of the town where they were supposed to have committed murders in broad daylight; and when arrested Sacco was found to have in his pocket an announcement of a forthcoming meeting at which Vanzetti was to speak." As Frankfurter revealed, the men's behavior on the night of their arrest was determined by their fear of prosecution as anarchists.

It is equally clear from Frankfurter's analysis of the case that Sacco and Vanzetti were tried for being anarchists. Frankfurter notes:

> The Commonwealth claimed that Sacco and Vanzetti's alleged anxiety on the evening of their arrest, and the lies they told, could only be explained by the fact that they were the murderers of Parmenter and Berardelli [the paymaster and guard at the South Braintree shoe factory]. The defense replied that their conduct was clearly accounted for by the fact that the men were Reds, in terror of the Department of Justice. To test the credibility of this answer the District Attorney proposed to examine Sacco and Vanzetti to find out whether they were really radicals or only pretending to be. It was on this theory that the Court allowed the cross-examination. The Commonwealth undertook to show that the defendants were imposters, that they were spurious Reds. In fact, it made not the least attempt to do so. It never disputed their radicalism. . . . Instead of undermining the claim of the defendants by which their conduct was explained, the District Attorney adopted their confession of radicalism, exaggerated and exploited it. He thereby wholly destroyed the basis of his original claim. For what reason was there any longer to suppose that the 'consciousness of guilt' was consciousness of murder rather than of radicalism?

The meaning of the Sacco and Vanzetti case

was not only its quality as a legal travesty or a social injustice, but also its importance as a case of political repression. Vanzetti wrote in 1927:

> I have understood from the beginning that Judge Thayer wanted to kill us because we were hated and feared. . . . Were not the first Christians believed to be blood-drinkers? Yes, they were believed so and insulted, tortured, martyrized by the ragged and golden mobs of their time. Even the so sage Marcus Aurelius feared, hated, insulted and killed them. Of course the first Christians were outlaws [because] they were against the laws who legalize slavery; against the powerful Roman Empire oppressing mankind and masters of the Courts and laws; they were gods-destroyers but destroyers of false gods. In this was their right, greatness, sanctity; for this they were put to death. What chance of fair deal and acquittal those not only innocent first Christians could have had in being tried by pagans to whom the fact of one being Christian was all the crimes and all the guilts at once and in one?
>
> "Radicalism" is a very general term, applicable to several parties and doctrine each of which differs from the other ones. Both Nick and I are anarchists—the radical of the radical—the black cats, the terrors of many, of all the bigots, exploitators, charlatans, fakers and oppressors. Consequently we are also the more slandered, misrepresented, misunderstood, and persecuted of all. After all we are socialists as the social-democrats, the socialists, the communists, and the I.W.W. are all Socialists. The difference—the fundamental one—between us and all the other is that they are authoritarian while we are libertarian; they believe in a State or Government of their own; we believe in no State or Government.

The ordeal of Sacco and Vanzetti symbolized the fate of workers in general and immigrants in particular during the 1920s. The Red scare of 1919-1920 was followed by an open-shop drive that allowed employers to destroy many AFL union locals, especially those organized during World War I.

Marchers protest the trial and execution of Sacco and Vanzetti, 1927
Source: Boston *Globe*

Although the Boston Central Labor Union remained relatively strong in the 1920s, its members were also affected by the antiunion drive, the depression of 1921, and the return to "normalcy" in government, which meant a series of antilabor court decisions (including one that declared child-labor laws unconstitutional). The enactment of immigration restriction in 1924, coupled with the rise of the racist and nativist Ku Klux Klan, helped to create the climate that doomed Sacco and Vanzetti.

The Red raids, along with the postwar open-shop drive against unions and the flight of New England industries to cheaper, Southern labor markets, created a crisis for many Boston-area industrial workers. These conditions also led to the decline of the promising industrial unions that workers built in the garment shops during the early 1900s. The International Ladies Garment Workers Union, which joined the Amalgamated in 1921 to defeat the Boston Clothing Manufacturers' Association, faced difficult times in the mid-1920s. As Russian-born Phil Kramer of the ILG recalled:

> The first strike I was involved in was a very bitter strike in 1925. It lasted through March,

April, and May. We naturally called a strike in season, when there was work in the industry. Sometimes 'the season' was in the heart of February, when the snow was knee deep.

The police were rough. They were bought out by the industry. We had to face what I call the Cossacks, the horseback riders who came to break up our picket lines. I was arrested 56 times, sometimes seven and eight times a day.

It was a tough struggle; the union wanted manufacturers to recognize us, to recognize the will of the people to organize. We wanted them to sit down and discuss conditions which were very, very bad. Wages were low, and hours were long. An employer would discharge a worker at will, without recourse.

Florence Luscomb delivers a speech from a soapbox

With garment unions weakened by an employer offensive and internal dissension, conditions in the Boston clothing industry deteriorated. Florence Luscomb, an ILG organizer who was active in efforts to form a labor party around the 1924 presidential candidacy of Progressive Senator Robert LaFollette, inspected clothing shops for two years as director of the Joint Sanitary Board. Luscomb, a leader of the women's suffrage movement in Massachusetts, remembered what she saw in Boston garment shops:

> During the two years I inspected, I found outrageous conditions in the women's garment industry. Safety and sanitary conditions required by Massachusetts laws were not enforced. For example, women sat all day at a sewing machine under an electric light which cast light on their work. The laws required that the light have a shield around it to protect the women's eyes, but the companies never bothered with that. Women sat eight hours a day with an electric light right in their eyes—imagine what that did to their eyesight over the years! The law also required that moving machine parts be guarded so that women would not injure their hands. Companies never had guards on machines. A toilet and a supply of health goods in case of accidents were also required.
>
> I went from factory to factory and found doors locked in violation of the law. I found trash on the floors, lunches, orange peels, because bosses didn't provide trash baskets and wouldn't sweep up. Toilets were filthy.
>
> I sent complaints to the State Inspection Department and they paid no attention.

By the time Samuel Gompers died in 1924, the American Federation of Labor, still reeling from the Red scare and the open-shop drive, was on the defensive and moving in a reactionary direction. Gompers, who had undermined the Boston police strike and refused to take action against the outrages of the Red scare, was replaced by an even more moderate leader, William Green, who accepted Gompers's principle that the craft union should be preeminent. Under Green's gentle leader-

ship the Federation assumed a new posture, one that it had never taken since its inception in the 1880s. It shifted from militancy to respectability. "With business supreme," writes Irving Bernstein in *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933*, "the AFL sought to sell itself as a necessary auxiliary of business."

As a result of Boston's diversified economy, the Boston Central Labor Union remained relatively strong compared to labor bodies in other New England cities. It claimed the allegiance of close to sixty thousand workers in 1929—about 17 percent of the work force, as compared to 10 percent of wage earners unionized on a national level. But this total represented about forty thousand fewer unionists than the BCLU had claimed in 1919. Carpenters, printers, and hod carriers accounted for 40 percent of the 1929 total. Most of the unions, except for D'Alessandro's hod carriers' local and the Hebrew bakers' locals, were led by Irish-Catholic officials who were often tied to patronage politicians and contractors of their own faith. Only 55 of the 347 elected officials in the BCLU were Italians, Jews, or blacks.

With the decline of the industrial unions such as the ILG and the Amalgamated, which were led by Italians and Jews and open to blacks, the exclusionary craft unions increased their domination of the AFL. (The growing building-trades unions, riding the crest of a construction boom, gained

Unemployed workers lining up before the Navy Yard for jobs, 1929

more influence than ever in the Federation.) "The drift of craft unionism toward a policy of exclusion . . . operated to keep Negroes out of the unions," wrote S. W. Manning, a student of black trade unionism in Boston. "The craft unions became more or less exclusive societies with limited memberships." Although the longshoremen's union decided to recruit black workers after they were introduced as strikebreakers in a bitter 1929 dock strike, AFL craft unions remained closed. Of the 236 blacks employed as masons, carpenters, electricians, and painters in 1930, only six were reported as union members.

Most black trade unionists in Boston belonged to the Musicians' Union No. 535 (founded in 1915) or the Hotel and Restaurant Employees International (which absorbed the Colored Waiters Alliance). A. Philip Randolph's Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, founded in 1925, had difficulty organizing in Boston. In any case, the AFL refused to admit the Brotherhood as a full-fledged affiliate in 1927, despite conciliatory gestures by Randolph. Like many other Boston workers, especially women and unskilled immigrants, black railroad workers entered the Depression without union protection. The Roaring Twenties were troubled times for most of these workers; in the 1930s other workers, including Boston's more privileged craft unionists, would face the perils of unemployment.

7

The Great Depression, the New Deal, and Labor in Boston

Owing to the diversified nature of Boston's economy, its light industry, and its periodic building booms, the AFL craft unions dominated the labor scene, especially in construction and transportation. The decline of the New England textile and shoe industries, plus the lack of new mass-production industry, made the industrial unionism of the IWW and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers very weak. When a new industrial union movement, the CIO, arose to challenge AFL business unionism in the mid 1930s, Boston's workers took a backseat to the workers in the great, mass-production, industrial centers. Boston's unskilled industrial workers gained with the rise of the CIO because of the rejuvenation of the garment unions and the creation of a few new industrial unions, but the working class as a whole did not take the great step forward in Boston that it took in other cities, from New York to San Francisco.

When the Committee of Industrial Organizations (CIO) split from the AFL, it came to represent some of the radicalism once associated with the IWW. Needless to say, the CIO—headed by the militant Mine Workers president, John L. Lewis—provoked the opposition of Boston AFL bosses such as E. A. Johnson of the Building Trades Council and Dan Tobin of the Teamsters, now one of the top national leaders of the Federation and an outspoken defender of craft unionism. The new unions also incurred the wrath of patronage politicians such as James Michael Curley and influential figures such as William Cardinal O'Connell, who still worried that aggressive unionism would lead to socialism.

Established figures ranging from Brahmin bankers to Irish politicians had plenty to worry about when the Depression struck the Hub with full force. Relief applicants crippled the city's private philanthropic resources, and unemployment threatened Boston's Irish-dominated patronage machine, which simply began to run out of jobs. James Michael Curley, elected to another term as mayor in 1929, used every trick in the book to take care of the jobless, but he failed to get the appropriations that he wanted to expand the patronage network through public works. As a stopgap, the mayor agreed to hire workers to clean up the city for its tercentenary celebration; when the city offered to hire snow shovelers at $5.00 a day, there was nearly a riot as thousands crammed into the employment bureau looking for work. There simply were too many looking for jobs—by the spring of 1930 at least forty thousand (11.5 percent) were jobless, but some estimates ranged as high as one hundred thousand (28.5 percent). By July of 1930 even the aristocratic building tradesmen were in deep trouble. AFL affiliates reported 45 percent of their numbers unemployed.

As the old patronage machine began to break down, Boston's workers turned to direct action. Navy Yard workers, whose jobs often derived from patronage, rallied at Faneuil Hall to protest layoffs. The left-wing Trade Union Unity League, a radical opponent of the AFL, held demonstrations on the Common, denouncing Curley. On March 6, 1930, Boston's Communists (a small cadre composed largely of Eastern European needle-trades workers) launched a protest march as part of a national campaign against unemployment. (When the marchers turned on the statehouse, they failed to gain access as easily as their predecessors had in 1894. Mounted police charged, broke up the demonstration, and jailed the leaders.) Six days later a riot occurred when over a

Jack McCarthy of the Trade Union Unity League delivers a speech against Mayor Curley and Governor Allen, 1930
Source: Boston University School of Public Communication

thousand men applied for jobs at the port of Boston, only to see twenty-five of their number hired. Striking longshoremen joined in the protest, which gave the affair a more threatening look.

A beleaguered Mayor Curley attacked a number of the disturbances as "Red inspired." When Boston police broke up a radical demonstration at the 1930 AFL convention in Boston (giving rise to charges of brutality against female pickets), the mayor demanded that all demonstrators be deported to Russia, even though many were U.S. citizens! But Curley was an astute enough politician to know that Red-baiting alone would not save him in this unprecedented crisis. Like New York's Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, Curley believed private charity and municipal resources were inadequate to meet the crisis. He called for a $21 million public works program for the commonwealth.

More drastic measures were needed. As Charles H. Trout writes in *Boston, The Great Depression and the New Deal*, "The first platoon of jobless workers was becoming an army." In 1931 and 1932 between 25 and 30 percent of Boston's workers lost their jobs. At least ninety thousand were jobless, while another fifty or sixty thousand were underemployed. The AFL unions tried to protect their members' jobs, but without much success. Unorganized workers fared much worse. As Trout observes, "Negro workers in the South End and Roxbury—almost none of them in unions, over seventy percent of them unskilled, with a tuberculosis rate four times higher than that of whites—experienced an unemployment rate some 15 to 18 percent above the city average." At the same time, the city's relief system—the most extensive in the country—was pressed hard. From 1929 to 1932, the number of families aided by the Overseers of the Public Welfare increased from 7,463 to 40,172, while relief expenditures shot up. However, thousands still remained desperate, on the edge of starvation. Faced with dismal relief and job prospects, many of the unemployed, including youngsters of both sexes, took to the rails. Unknown numbers came to Boston looking for relief; in 1932, the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad reported a 200 percent increase in the number of trespassers headed for Boston.

Communist demonstrators in the Boston Common
Source: Boston University School of Public Communication

Unemployed men shoveling snow in a city work project at Dock Square, early 1930s
Source: SPNEA

Checked in his efforts to increase state and federal relief funds, Mayor Curley put aside an old bias against private charity and endorsed a major philanthropic campaign, a sign that the Great Depression had stymied the country's master urban patronage politician. Curley also campaigned actively for the presidential nomination of New York Governor Franklin Delano Roosevelt, despite support among many Massachusetts Democrats for FDR's predecessor as governor, Al Smith, the "happy warrior," who was defeated by Herbert Hoover in the 1928 presidential election.

After supporting FDR's nomination and candidacy, Curley sought to be named secretary of the Navy. When that post was denied to him, the mayor was considered as ambassador to Italy, an appointment that Cardinal O'Connell is rumored to have aborted. Then Roosevelt apparently offered Curley the position of ambassador to Poland. Insulted by this offer, the mayor refused and denounced Roosevelt. (While he was considering the post of ambassador to Poland, a joke swept Boston that if Curley were to accept the post he would get a construction contract going to pave the Polish Corridor.)

Roosevelt also passed over Boston's leading union Democrat, Dan Tobin, who coveted the secretary of labor post. In doing so, Roosevelt served notice that he was not beholden to the old AFL bosses, who had been far from unanimous in supporting his candidacy. The President's choice for the cabinet position, Boston-born social worker Frances Perkins (who worked as New York State industrial commissioner), reflected the New Deal concern for labor legislation and arbitration as distinct from the "pure and simple" focus on labor organization epitomized by Dan Tobin. Frances Perkins was one of a generation of well-educated New England women who were inspired by Jane Addams, Florence Kelly, and other settlement-house pioneers. Those Boston social investigators and settlement workers included Edith Abbot, Vida Scudder, Emily Greene Balch, Helena Dudley,

Mayor Curley and Franklin D. Roosevelt in Boston during the 1932 campaign
Source: Boston Public Library

Mabel Gillespie, and Ann Withington. Most of them worked at Denison House and served as allies in the Women's Trade Union League. They knew Frances Perkins and were undoubtedly pleased that she was appointed to the post of labor secretary over the Teamsters' Tobin.

As a result of Mayor Curley's feud with the Roosevelt administration and of petty fighting among Bay State Democrats, the early federal relief programs that the New Deal created were not implemented effectively, as Charles Trout shows. The parochialism of the Boston bosses, including Curley, became the bane of relief administrators such as Harry Hopkins, whose programs threatened the patronage politicians' power. The political bickering over relief threatened to exacerbate a desperate situation. "The picture is so grim that whatever words I use will seem hysterical and exaggerated," wrote Martha Gelhorn, an employee of the Federal Emergency Relief Agency in 1934. The administration of federal emergency relief in Boston was so "blatantly bad" that the New Deal's efforts had become "an object of disapproval (if not disgust) for the unemployed classes," she reported. In the homes of unemployed workers she saw "fear driving them into a state of semi-collapse; cracking nerves, and an over-powering terror of the future." As she told FERA head Harry Hopkins, it was a tragedy "of a human being driven beyond his or her power of endurance and sanity."

Another public works program, the Civil Works Administration administered by Harry Hopkins, faced tough going in Boston. The mayor of Chelsea wrote Hopkins in January of 1934 that in his municipality just 155 unemployed workers obtained CWA jobs. Two thousand unemployed workers congregated before city hall, and their presence prompted the mayor to warn Hopkins that "the Federal Government, once having acknowledged its responsibility by giving jobs merely for the sake of a job, must now put every unemployed man to work doing the most useful task that can be found for him. . . . If some such remedial measure is not immediately adopted, I . . . predict fundamental and sweeping changes in the structure of our government before the end of the present year."

Under these circumstances, some of Boston's desperate workers turned to the radical movement. George Charney took over as Communist party organizational secretary for New England early in 1935. "By and large, the party seemed to be stagnating in the outlying industrial areas of the district. But in Boston, the movement was more alive and promising . . . ," Charney observed. "The Jewish movement was the largest; and yet we had a small group of Irish in South Boston, proletarians and intellectuals who played an active part in the work of the party. The Irish comrades were the most zealous opponents of Father Coughlin in Boston. They spoke disparagingly of the 'shanty Irish' and the 'lace curtain Irish,' and railed especially against Cardinal O'Connell and the political domination of the Church. Yet I could detect the inner tensions of those who loudly proclaimed their independence, their antagonism to the Church, and the continuing tug of its influence." Charney concluded, "They were a fine group of men, some with a history in the IRA, who tried in their own imagination to merge the Easter rebellion with the class struggle in America."

As Charney suggests, the right-wing ideology of radio priest Reverend Charles Coughlin was a political force in Boston. James Michael Curley, who left his frustrating post as mayor to run successfully for governor in 1934, boasted that "Boston was the strongest Coughlinite city in America." Although Curley refrained from Father Coughlin's rabid anti-Semitism, he did embrace the radio priest's right-wing populism and defense of the little man against big government and big business. By 1936, Representative John McCormick warned FDR that Coughlin's supporters were "sullen, discontented and bitter," and that forty thousand of them had taken the trouble to vote for a Coughlinite sticker candidate in the 1936 senatorial primary. This right-wing candidate, Thomas C. O'Brien, helped Governor Curley to win the primary by taking votes from the other candidates, but the Coughlinite double-crossed Curley and remained in the field for the general election despite the Governor's purported offer of $10,000 to withdraw. Curley's flirtation with Coughlinism backfired. O'Brien polled enough Democratic votes to allow Henry Cabot Lodge,

Governor Curley escorts Father Coughlin out of the Massachusetts House of Representatives, 1935
Source: Boston *Globe*

Jr. to defeat Curley in the senatorial race, even though Curley won the endorsement of the State Federation of Labor. Despite frequent attacks on Coughlin by AFL bigwig Dan Tobin, many workers joined with frustrated Catholic small-business men in voting for the Coughlinite candidate, whose right-wing populism bore an eerie resemblance to European fascism.

Although Coughlinism failed to win enough working-class support in Boston to become a serious threat, its popularity did reveal the weakness of trade unionism and New Deal liberalism in Boston. Other cities were being swept by the organizing drives of CIO industrial unions in 1936 and 1937, while the Hub remained firmly in the AFL camp. Consequently, the progressive and often radical politics generated by the CIO had little impact on the commonwealth's capital. Indeed, while New Dealers in other states were propelled by the demands of their CIO constituents, Boston's Democratic politicians opposed the new unions and maintained their ties with the old AFL, which had been all but discredited by its do-nothing posture in the early 1930s.

It was fitting that Dan Tobin, the local business agent who rose to the presidency of the Teamsters', rose to defend AFL craft unionism when it was attacked by John L. Lewis and the industrial union renegades in 1935. Having already denounced his own militant members in Minneapolis and having widely expressed his views about the poor union capabilities of unskilled workers, Tobin invoked the names of Sam Gompers and Frank Foster and stood on "the rock of tradition" while denouncing industrial unionism. Speaking of the old "aristocracy of labor," Tobin admitted he used force to back up decisions in the teamsters' union. Otherwise, Tobin argued, "we would not have an international union of 135,000 members—and they are not the rubbish that have lately come into other organizations."

While the CIO swept through America's industrial heartland in 1936-1937, Tobin and business unionists maintained control in Boston, and strengthened their unions by taking advantage of the protection offered by the 1935 Wagner Act. For example, Tobin's old Teamsters' Local 25, with only a few hundred members in 1933, claimed six thousand by 1940. Some of the city's workers, however, made themselves part of the CIO upsurge, notably the revived Amalgamated Clothing Workers and International Ladies Garment Workers. Boston locals of these two industrial unions attacked some of the country's most exploitative sweatshops in a crusade during the winter of 1936. Militant women in the needle trades fought bitter battles with strikebreakers and police in the garment district, and by spring the two CIO unions won nearly all their strike demands, including a forty-hour week in place of the fifty-two-hour week.

Striking garment workers in the Kneeland Street garment-district strike, 1936

By 1936, when the Works Projects Administration hit full stride, the federal government and the New Deal gained a somewhat better reputation. There was still great suffering, especially among those who lacked political clout. Colonel Thomas Sullivan's work relief headquarters took much better care of the sons of Erin than other ethnic groups, according to Professor Trout's figures. Based on a fair proportion according to population, the South Boston Irish were strongly represented compared to North End Italians and Jews. As John DeCosta, who is of Portuguese descent, recalled, "I can remember being on the WPA which was controlled mostly by Irish. I was working out at the Fairview Cemetery and I was treated cooly until they found out that I came from South Boston. One or two guys from Southie who were working there knew me and said, 'Oh, he's all right.'"

Federal employees actually formed one of the first CIO locals in Boston, in order to organize unemployed workers then on WPA projects. Many WPA workers had participated in the Workers' Alliance, an organization of the unemployed created by socialists and communists in the early 1930s. In 1936, Florence Luscomb, a well-known feminist, ran for Congress on the People's Labor party ticket. This independent workers' party, headed by Salvatore Camilio, president of CIO Local 25 of the rubber workers, gained support in 1937 as a recession increased unemployment and New Deal reforms came to an abrupt halt. In fact, the main activities of the Workers' Alliance and the People's Labor party in Cambridge involved protest against WPA layoffs at a time when joblessness was on the rise again. Luscomb, Camilio, and other Labor party activists were also critical of the labor movement's unreserved support for President Roosevelt and the Democratic party.

In 1937, the President had turned his back on United Auto Workers sit-down strikers at General Motors, an act that John L. Lewis regarded as a double-cross given the political support the CIO generated for FDR's reelection in 1936. By 1938, Roosevelt seemed to have surrendered to conservatives in the courts and his own party who were cutting the New Deal to shreds.

The CIO challenge provoked a response from old AFL locals, which began to take the offensive for the first time in twenty years. Days lost by strikes in Boston increased 153 percent in 1936 alone. At the end of that year only 74,717 workers belonged to unions, but by the end of the decade 119,572 enjoyed union benefits.

Rose Norwood, who worked to organize laundry workers in the early years of the New Deal, and helped lead a strike at the Pilgrim Laundry in the South End, found the AFL as reluctant to help organize women as it had been when prodded by the Women's Trade Union League in the early 1900s. Later on, however, Norwood found the AFL Retail Clerks Union more helpful in organizing Jordan Marsh. She recalled:

> When I started to organize at Jordan's they put detectives on my trail. Every time they started chasing me, I went to the ladies' room so they couldn't catch me. At the time, they had about 7,000 workers. I'd go to the huge dining room and get my coffee, and I'd sit amongst the workers and talk about the literature. The cops would spy me, usher me out one door, and I'd come

back in another door. The workers loved it when I did that. They thought, 'She's got guts; that's what we need.' One day I hired a hurdy man for $10.00 and I told him to be on Avon Street at eight o'clock. I gave out literature while he played.

"In some cases," writes Sari Roboff in her history of Boston's workers, "the C.I.O. formed rival unions to complacent A.F.L. locals." In the 1930s, the AFL formed a labor union for office workers, Florence Luscomb recalled. "I joined and became one of its officers. I also represented the union to the Boston Central Labor Union. But the union was not very active. It had organized only one public stenographer's office and it wasn't trying to organize other office workers." Luscomb continued:

Actually, the union had been founded by the people who owned the firm. Any organization that needed a union label on its work had to go to the firm. A lot of the small trade unions in Boston did not have a large office staff, and they needed a union label on their stenographic work. They would employ this one union firm. The owners knew that as long as they employed the only union stenographers in Boston, they would get a great deal of work. When I was elected president of the union, I was anxious to begin a large organizing campaign with other public stenographers. The union didn't want other public stenographers to join the union, since it would mean competition. The company interfered. I felt this was not a real union; it was a phoney union.

In 1939, there was a movement by the C.I.O. to establish a United Office and Professional Workers Union in the companies that hired mostly women. I was very interested in the idea. I was part of a little group in Boston that took the initiative to found a local branch of the United Office and Professional Workers, C.I.O. A year or two later, I was elected president of the local. We never grew to be a very large organization, but we improved the conditions of women in many offices.

Unfortunately, the CIO was not able to repeat its success among women garment workers by unionizing the white-collar office and semiprofessional jobs, where Boston's female wage earners were heavily concentrated. Only in recent years have organizing drives among teachers, clerical workers, and hospital workers helped to mobilize these women.

Although some of Boston's black workers looked favorably upon the CIO, others remained skeptical. According to Boston University scholar S. W. Manning, these workers believed that as soon as the new organization grew older and stronger, it would "become as prejudice-ridden as the American Federation of Labor." The promise of interracial unionism held open by the CIO remained unfilled in Boston, largely because the city lacked heavy industries such as coal, steel, and auto, where the new unions were most successful in organizing blacks and whites together. As a result, few black workers joined unions at all during the 1930s, except for about eight hundred workers who belonged to either the Dining Car Employees, the Red Caps Union, or A. Philip Randolph's Sleeping Car Porters. (Randolph's union finally won a contract with the Pullman Company in 1937.)

Randolph's threat to march on Washington for defense jobs in 1941 helped to open some positions for blacks in unionized sectors of the shipbuilding industry. Boston's minorities, however, remained outside the labor movement even during the World War II upsurge, when the total number of unionized workers in the United States increased dramatically, from 10.5 million to 14.7 million. During this time the Packinghouse Workers, one of the few CIO unions strengthened in Boston during the war, actually worked to bring more blacks into the industry.

As John Mitchell of the Amalgamated Packinghouse Workers commented to Sari Roboff, the Packinghouse Workers Local 11 was founded by "Italian and Jewish radicals" in the late thirties. The first big drive began in 1942 when Jessie Prosten started organizing the Swift plants. In contrast to some AFL unions, "we tried to make the

Packinghouse Workers a democratic union." Mitchell recalled:

> We conducted regular shop meetings in halls near the plant. We often used the meeting as a weapon when we had a difficult grievance that could not be solved. When noontime meetings went past one o'clock, the boss would call wanting to know where the workers were. When we told him we were talking about this troublesome grievance, he would offer to send the negotiating committee to see if it could be settled. It always worked until 1954 at Colonial Provision Company. They locked us out, starting the longest strike in the history of the Packinghouse Workers Union.
>
> Local 11's fight for racial equality began at our first International Convention in Omaha in 1944. The black delegates were discriminated against in their hotel accommodations. Jessie Prosten and some of our black leadership led a fight at the convention attacking the Arrangements Committee. We adopted resolutions that the UPWA would never again meet in a city unless there were public accommodations for all delegates. It was difficult to find such a city in the States, so we held our 1946 convention in Montreal.
>
> We also started a campaign to force employers in Boston to hire blacks. There were not many blacks in the Boston local before that campaign. In the fifties, the campaign picked up in Local 11, partly because of the Colonial strike. We had pressured Colonial to promote the few blacks they had hired. During the 1954 strike, Colonial went to the South End to get labor who stayed on after the settlement and joined the union.

Of course, the CIO Packinghouse Workers Union was the exception to the rule. Few unions adopted a similar approach to inter-racial organizing. The weakness of the CIO unions in Boston resulted not only from the city's lack of large-scale, mass-production industries. Industrial unions also faced the opposition of the AFL craft unions and of the patronage bosses. James Michael Curley could bargain with the AFL unions, but he was not sure he could control the radical political impulses released by the new CIO unions. The Catholic Church was also opposed to the CIO. In fact, during the late 1940s the Church actively attacked those new unions with left-wing tendencies, notably the United Electrical Workers whose leadership included a number of Communists. When other left-wing unions were purged from the CIO in 1949, the UE withdrew. With its leadership under fire by the government and its membership wooed by anti-communist unions, the United Electrical Workers maintained itself precariously as one of the few progressive unions dedicated to fighting on behalf of greater equality for women and blacks, a fight the UE led during World War II.

All of these developments help to explain the relative conservatism of Boston trade unions since World War II. Essentially, the unions have been on the defensive for the entire period since the war. First, they fought against charges of communism and corruption; then they faced the crippling effects of the Taft-Hartley Act, which curtailed many of labor's basic rights. The unions also existed in a declining economy where the loss of jobs, except in certain areas of the public sector, reinforced a strong tradition of job consciousness.

The long-standing tradition of exclusionary craft unionism has been challenged by blacks and women since the AFL was first created in the 1880s, and in recent years the challenge has become much stronger. Blacks, Hispanics, and other new immigrants have become a greater part of the city's labor force, and they are pressing their demands for union jobs and union protection. Lacking the experience of integrated unionism created by the CIO in other cities, Boston unions have failed by and large to meet the city's racial crisis.

Since the war, women have also played a much greater role in the economy as wage earners, especially in Boston with its enormous clerical work force and its many service workers in hospitals and other public institutions. New groups, like 9 to 5, the organization of Boston's women clerical workers, have pressed for more equality on the job. Many unions have responded to these new issues and some have helped in the organizing

drives of female clerical and service workers, but so far these women have remained largely outside unions.

Clearly the time has come for the rebirth of a progressive labor movement in Boston; the city's workers cannot afford to live without it. Italian-born Enrico Porente, who became a militant in the Amalgamated Clothing Workers in 1912 after joining the Industrial Workers of the World during the Lawrence strike, eloquently expressed the need for this revival: "The labor movement in this country is not the same labor movement as it was. There was class struggle; now everything is agreement. The labor movement needs a third renaissance, a third *risorgimento*. The first was in 1905 with the birth of the IWW; the second was the birth of the CIO in 1936. Now we need a third. The majority of our people still do not have power."

Epilogue: Boston Workers Since World War II

Since World War II Boston's workers have experienced vast changes. We can sketch only a few of the major developments unfolding in the postwar world of the urban working class. A full analysis of the city's labor history during the past quarter-century will have to be written at a later time.

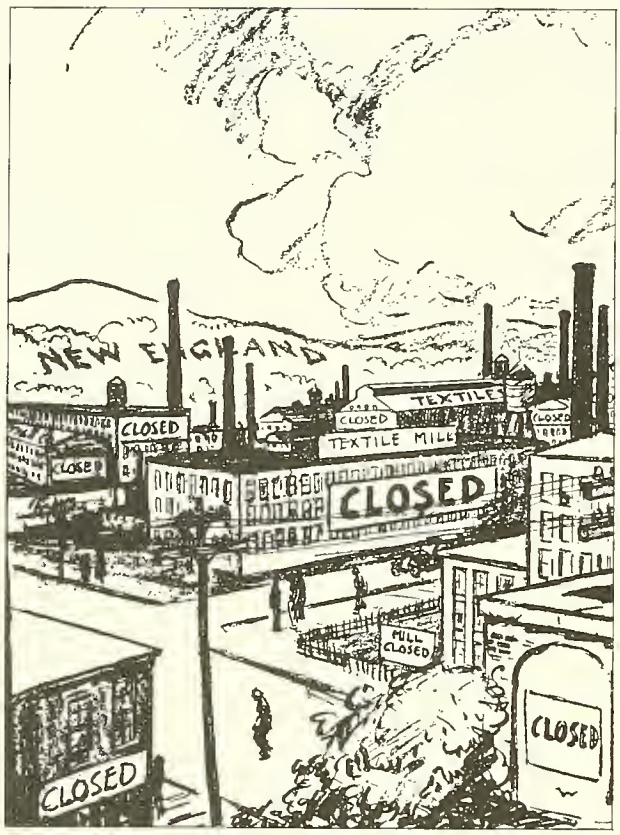
Such a history would of course have to emphasize the industrial decline of New England which lost 250,000 jobs after World War II. In Boston, which lost 50,000 jobs in the same period, the labor movement has been seriously limited by the economics of scarcity. During the 1950s, for example, 77 of the 99 corporations developing along Route 128 left the city for the suburbs which cost the Hub 3,700 jobs. Union shops were especially hard hit.

Other important examples of inner-city job loss include the longshore industry, where thousands of people lost work on the Boston waterfront because of mechanization or containerization, and in the garment and shoe industries, where runaway shops have continued to move to low-wage, nonunion sectors in the South and overseas. In general, the availability of low-wage, nonunion labor, coupled with tax incentives and lower overhead, has created a higher profit margin for manufacturing companies in the South than they find in older, developed regions like Massachusetts—with its higher taxes, higher energy costs, and overhead, and higher wage levels affected by unionization.

Naturally, the loss of jobs in Massachusetts has caused working people great distress. Their trade unions have been weakened. The Massachusetts AFL-CIO, which claimed 525,000 dues-paying members in 1962, accounted for 250,000 members in 1979. The loss of jobs has also strengthened the traditional job consciousness of Boston workers. The concern for job security, heightened by the Great Depression, continued to be a major force in trade-union politics in the years after the war, when unemployment remained high throughout New England. Finally, the competition for jobs has, as always, made it more difficult for white males in unions to open their organizations to unskilled women and minority workers. Although Boston's current racial crisis is described largely in terms of schooling and housing, it is, as we shall see, a problem that has been exacerbated by competition for jobs in a scarce economy.

While industrial jobs, especially in manufacturing, have declined in Boston since World War II, jobs in the lower-paying clerical and service sectors have increased. Jobs for women in hospitals, restaurants, government agencies, etc. have supposedly replaced functions women once performed in the nuclear family. Clerical jobs are created, especially in cities such as Boston, to service large private corporations and public bureaucracies. As the late Harry Braverman wrote in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*, "While labor tends to stagnate in the manufacturing sector, it piles up" in the service sector, where "many firms proliferate in fields with lower capital-entry requirements"—for example, the fast-food industry. "Largely non-union and drawing on the pool of pauperized labor at the bottom of the working-class population, these industries create new low-wage sectors of the working class, more intensely exploited and oppressed than those in mechanized fields of production."

Post World War II Boston has seen the development of the kind of service economy that Braverman analyzes in *Labor and Monopoly Capital*. Following World War II, Boston's job market con-



Cartoon of the flight of the textile industry from New England

tracted for blue-collar workers, especially in older crafts like printing. At the same time, the job market grew for clerical and service workers, who found low-wage, nonunion employment in Boston's expanding service sector of financial, educational, and health-care institutions.

There are now close to two hundred thousand women clerical workers employed in the Boston area; they comprise 74 percent of the clerical work force. In the insurance industry, women comprise 87 percent of the clerical work force, while men occupy 72 percent of the professional and managerial positions. According to statistics gathered by 9 to 5, the Boston organization for women office workers, women now make up 41 percent of the overall work force, but they receive only 25 percent of the total wages paid to Boston area workers. The annual median earnings for women are $4,031 as compared to $8,290 for men. Despite the higher status traditionally associated with white-collar work, women clericals receive much lower wages than blue-collar workers. According to a 1973 report by 9 to 5, "women office workers are underpaid all over the country," but "their wage problem is more acute in Boston than any other large American city."

There has been rising discontent with the wage discrimination against women, especially in the clerical labor force. Along with some trade unions, like the Service Employees International (SEIU) and District 65, 9 to 5 has attempted to organize women clericals to fight sex discrimination at the workplace. At the same time, hospital workers' Local 1199 has attempted to organize health-care workers, most of whom are female, frequently from minority communities. Thus far the city's large universities, insurance companies, publishing houses, and hospitals have been using effective union-busting tactics, tactics that sophisticated industrial corporations abandoned years ago in favor of strategies designed to make the unions more cooperative.

Building on a long tradition of trade-union militancy among city employees, the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees (AFSCME) has organized many of the government workers in the city along with SEIU. The utilities industry and the trucking industry are two well-organized areas of Boston's private, profit-making sector. Both the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers and the International Brotherhood of Teamsters have large locals in the Boston area. But these gains have been offset by big losses in the old unionized trades such as meat packing, printing, rail transport, textiles, docks, and light manufacturing. As Enrico Porente so eloquently argues, it is time for a renaissance in the Boston labor movement.

Having been largely bypassed by the great CIO upsurge of the 1930s, the city's workers are desperately in need of a new industrial-union movement to organize the unorganized. As we have seen in the past, the unorganized, unskilled work-

ers have great resources they can bring to bear in workplace struggles, but they need the help of their more privileged brothers and sisters in the unionized sectors. Of course, it is in the best interest of the unions to organize the unorganized, because a low-wage sector, such as the clerical and service industries, depresses the labor market for all workers. The old slogan of the Knights of Labor is as true now as it was a century ago: "An Injury to One Is an Injury to All."

The fragmentation of the old patronage machine since World War II has eroded the access to unionized municipal jobs that Irish and Italian workers won through ward bosses earlier in the century. City-wide patronage politics came under initial attack during the late 1930s, when the pro-Roosevelt wing of the Democratic party, led by Maurice Tobin, cut through Curley's web of personal loyalties. In 1941, Curley lost the mayoralty to Tobin by 9,200 votes, but in the next year he returned to office, winning a congressional seat in a Red-baiting, anti-CIO campaign that won the support of Boston's AFL leaders. After the war, his political foes in the national Democratic administration did little to hinder his indictment and conviction for a contract-procurement offense, an action quite common in the Congress. With a jail sentence hanging over his head, Curley decided to run again for mayor in 1945. The CIO, along with various other factions of the Democratic party, opposed him, but to no avail. Much to everyone's surprise, the twice-convicted, seventy-one-year-old man won the support of many young, ethnic, working-class voters, including many discontented veterans, and beat his rivals. "Curley may steal from the rich, if you want to call it that," said one supporter, "but he gives it to the poor."

This was to be James Michael Curley's last hurrah and last term in office, though he did run unsuccessfully several times in the 1950s. In his last term he tried, with some success, to revive his old patronage machine as once again the corridors of city hall filled with working people asking for favors. With Curley's last mayoralty, however, the heydey of this style of patronage passed away, though remnants of the machine remained strong in community politics.

The decline of the patronage machine must be seen in the context of an urban class struggle, a struggle that has pitted Yankee capital against ethnic workers since the Civil War. Curley and his organization had cajoled and coerced the city's business elite for nearly half a century, but by the end of the war it was clear that the employers and bankers would no longer be checked by cantankerous ethnic politicians. As Steve Miller writes of Curley's last term in office: "During the last years of his rule the combination of regional industrial collapse, Brahmin financial retreat, and Irish aggressiveness made Boston, the Hub of New England, virtually off limits for upper class investment." In effect, Yankee capital, hostile to the political power of the Curley machine, went on strike against Boston, refusing to make major investments in the city until the 1950s. Most large cities experienced a construction boom in the 1930s and 1940s; but as two Boston *Globe* reporters wrote, "the negative attitude of the Yankee-dominated insurance industry was so fervent that no mortgages on buildings in Irish-dominated Boston were granted."

With Curley out of office and the old ethnic patronage machine in decline, three developments accelerated the creation of a "new Boston." First, a fresh wave of Irish Democratic politicians, dedicated to attracting capital investment to the city, dominated Boston's politics. Second, private institutions preaching boosterism and reformism began to reinvest in the city on their own terms. Third, the federal government expanded the scope of its bureaucratic functions, and poured a great deal of money into Boston to build a sixty-acre government center on the sites of Scollay Square and Bowdoin Square. Municipal politicians and urban planners were willing to make deals with big businesses and the banks to facilitate the revitalization of the core city. During the 1950s, Mayor John B. Hynes succeeded in developing a working alliance with Brahmin Republicans, who granted him the political legitimacy and financial cooperation that they had denied Curley. Hynes created an Auditorium Commission to design a convention center for Boston, and a Government Center Commission to plan a cluster of government build-

ings in the Scollay Square area.

He also established the Boston Redevelopment Authority, which hastened the destruction of the "New York Streets" neighborhood in the South End to make way for a new plant for the *Herald* and buildings for light industry. As Steve Miller writes, "The Italian North End, close to downtown, was selected for destruction. But that community was too tightly organized, so the planners moved over to the unorganized West End. Studies began as soon as Curley was removed from office. In ten years the entire district was razed and the residents dispersed." Once the bailiwick of Martin Lomasney, the kingpin of ward politics in Boston, the West End lost its political clout after the war. According to Herbert Gans's study, *The Urban Villagers,* its working-class Italian residents held a fatalistic attitude toward the outside world represented by business and city hall. By the time they started to organize, it was too late.

In some sections, such as the predominantly Irish areas of Charlestown and South Boston, urban renewal posed no threat because the old political machine was still strong. In other areas, such as the South End and the Washington Park area of Roxbury, poor working people (including many blacks) organized an effective politics of resistance, even though these communities lacked the power of machine politics. The mobilization of diverse groups of working people in sections such as the South End's Castle Square neighborhood forced urban planners to be more responsive to community housing needs.

In 1959, John F. Collins was elected mayor over state senate president John E. Powers of South Boston, a politician with strong connections to the old patronage machine. As a supporter of the "new Boston," Mayor Collins tapped the coalition of bankers, businessmen, and academics developed by Hynes. In an effort to restore the image of the city's revitalization efforts (damaged by the West End tragedy), Collins appointed Monsignor Francis J. Lally, editor of *The Pilot*, as chairman of the Boston Redevelopment Authority, and hired New Haven city planner Ed Logue as administrator. During Collins's term the New Boston began to take shape in the form of a multimillion-dollar government center built on the ruins of Scollay Square and a number of commercial projects, notably the Prudential Center, built on the old railroad yards that had symbolized Boston's nineteenth-century industrial and commercial vitality.

Although urban renewal provided some new jobs, especially in construction, its long-term effects were to expand the low-wage, nonunion service and clerical sectors. The Massachusetts General Hospital expanded on the site of the old West End. Tufts New England Medical Center expanded its facilities at Washington and Stuart Streets. A number of Boston banks and investment houses built impressive skyscrapers in the financial district. To run efficiently, these health care and financial institutions required a large pool of service help, a pool comprised largely of women and racial minorities who lacked the protection offered by craft unions and the political clout provided by political machines.

During the 1950s and 1960s urban renewal opened few jobs for minorities, and since most of the expanding state and municipal jobs remained overwhelmingly white, blacks and the new Latin American immigrants faced the continuing dilemma of unemployment. A few blacks found jobs by commuting to the many new plants opened along Route 128, but by and large they have been excluded, so much so that a 1975 study of suburban jobs by the Massachusetts Committee Against Discrimination called Route 128 Boston's "road to segregation." Some blacks have penetrated the city's skilled job sector, especially in federally funded construction projects, but most gains have come in the federal and state bureaucracies and in the low-wage service sector jobs which employ many black women.

These gains are limited to be sure, but even this much progress by minority workers has been viewed as a threat by some white workers; many of these workers resent the favoritism the government allegedly displays toward minorities. During the 1960s, a period when the labor movement was on the defensive, civil rights and welfare rights activists took the offensive forcing the government to provide some support for the unemployed minorities. Although some unions supported this

offensive, many white workers did not. They were especially resentful of gains made by welfare recipients, even though the advances benefited whites as well as blacks. They also resented the poverty programs which briefly allowed blacks to dispense jobs in their own communities, even though these programs represented a very small-scale effort to duplicate the earlier ethnic patronage machines that had provided so many white workers with employment. In fact, some of the strongest fears of black encroachment seem to exist among Boston city workers, who gained their jobs through the old patronage machine.

State legislation and federal court orders have led to the desegregation of the Boston public schools. The effort to desegregate the teaching staff (which contained a lower percentage of blacks than that of any large northern school system) has not been very successful. This effort has however raised the possibility that many city jobs will be opened to minorities for the first time. In an economy of scarce jobs and scarce housing, in which economic security is harder to obtain, efforts to desegregate in any area—schools, jobs, neighborhoods—will be perceived as a threat by many white workers, even in cases where desegregation benefits everyone by increasing federal and state funding.

During Boston's recent racial crisis the labor unions have, by and large, failed to defend the larger interests of the working class. Instead, most unions have ignored the crisis or resorted to a traditional job-conscious defense of the limited privileges enjoyed by their white members. A few progressive unions, such as the Packinghouse Workers (one of the few CIO affiliates to establish itself in Boston), have found it difficult to quell the rising tide of racial fear. The Packinghouse Workers, now merged with the Amalgamated Meat Cutters, have actually been prevented from meeting in their South Boston office because of fear for the safety of their black members.

The white working-class fear of black job competition is based on a long tradition of job consciousness in a capricious labor market. The Irish attacked "cheap" Italian workers for threatening their job security in terms similar to those we now hear used against blacks and Hispanics trying to break into the unionized job sector. Referring to the projected multimillion-dollar MBTA project to redevelop the transportation corridor through the South End and Roxbury, a spokesman for the Third World Workers Association said that "the unions have been . . . resistant to . . . black, Spanish-speaking, and Chinese workers having a right to 50 percent of the [new] jobs in their own communities . . . , and a right to standard training opportunities." These unions "look at the $600 million price tag over the next 10-15 years as their piece and [say] that, sure, the blacks and Chinese can have some crumbs, 'but . . . nobody is going to take our piece.'"

Despite some gains in the last twenty-five years, minority workers still believe they are largely shut out of the higher wages and union job security achieved by white workers. In fact, between 1950 and 1970, the black-white wage differential did not change. In 1970, as in 1950, black workers in Boston earned only about two thirds of what their white counterparts earned. White trade unionists argue that there are not enough skilled tradesmen in the minority communities to fill better-paying jobs. Blacks, Hispanics, and others respond that they are excluded from apprenticeship programs and trade unions. It is a vicious circle in which minority workers compete with white workers for a larger piece of a shrinking job pie. Under the circumstances, trade unions, which earlier won immigrant workers steady jobs and better working conditions, become part of the problem rather than part of the solution as far as minority workers are concerned. Unless working-class organizations can develop an overall strategy for job security—which means strong limits on the traditional right of employers to move their plants—racial divisions within the work population will increase, because unemployment and job competition will remain the primary economic forces in working people's lives.

Throughout Boston's labor history workers have been fighting each other for a larger piece of the pie—a pie owned by someone else. Too often the most recent immigrant group—the Irish, the Italians, and now the Blacks and Hispanics—has had

to settle for crumbs. In the years before World War I, and then again during the Great Depression, Boston workers protested that labor's share of the pie was too small. Since World War II and the suppression of Communists and progressive unionists in the labor movement, few have questioned the size of the economic pie; they have argued largely over which group of workers should have the largest piece.

While labor unions can be criticized for heightening divisions among workers, they certainly cannot be blamed for creating those divisions. Employers have consciously manipulated the labor market in order to exploit the "cheap" labor of women and immigrants; these employers, not the unions, are responsible for the job scarcity and economic insecurity that have caused so many tensions within the working class.

Boston's workers have made their own history; they have done so by engaging in strikes and various agitational campaigns, by creating unions and political organizations, and by fighting for more humane social legislation. But the city's working people made their history under difficult circumstances imposed upon them by others. After World War II the decline of the Curley patronage machine and the loss of jobs to the suburbs and to low-wage regions limited aggressive working-class activity. Most unions have taken a defensive position oriented largely toward protecting their members' jobs and benefits. Under these circumstances, the continuing influx of women and minorities into Boston's crowded labor market has created new tensions. Unfortunately, some unions have exacerbated these tensions by reverting to their exclusionary craft union traditions. As a result, working-class unity seems more difficult than ever to attain.

History shows, however, that the labor movement in Boston and elsewhere has overcome depressing economic circumstances and divisive social conditions, notably in the late 1930s when the CIO organized across craft, race, and sex lines in the midst of the Great Depression. The call to organize the unorganized echoes back through the city's labor history from the heroic days of the CIO to the era of the Knights of Labor, but in recent years only a few unions have responded to the call.

If Boston's workers remain divided and if most women and minorities remain unorganized, there will be no hope of altering the circumstances that have allowed capital to dominate labor; no hope of creating new possibilities for social and economic equality in the future; and no hope of renewing the vision of a better society articulated a century ago by the Knights of Labor who dedicated themselves to creating a truly cooperative commonwealth.

Bibliography

This is a list of sources and suggestions for further reading about Boston workers' history. In the first place, we list the source materials we have used in writing this book. Books and articles are listed in the order in which they are used in the text of each chapter. Some of these are easily available in libraries, and some have been published in paperback. In the second place, we list readings that explore topics in further detail.

In the case of each source reference, we have provided the place and date of *original* publication. If there has been a new edition in hardback we provide the new publisher's name and mark the book with a cross, like this:+ If there is a new edition in paperback, we supply the paperback publisher's name followed by an asterisk, like this:* We hope this will help readers who would like to inquire more deeply into the history of Boston's workers.

General Reading:

Sari Roboff, *Labor in Boston: An Oral History of Work and Union Organizing* (Boston: Boston 200, 1977)* is the only survey of Boston labor history available; it is especially valuable because it offers personal accounts of working conditions and union organizing since World War I, a period of the city's history about which there is very little written information.

George E. McNeill (ed.), *The Labor Movement, The Problem of Today* (Boston and New York, 1886; 2nd ed., Augustus M. Kelley)+ is a collection of important historical essays by the leader of Boston's late nineteenth-century labor movement; it contains especially useful selections on the history of labor legislation and the struggle for shorter hours, which emphasize the leading role played by Boston's workers.

Philip S. Foner, *History of the Labor Movement in the United States*, 4 vols. (New York, 1947-1963; 2nd ed., International Publishers)* is probably the most helpful survey of U.S. labor history before World War I; it is fairly well written and consistently critical of the moderates and conservatives in the labor movement.

Roz Baxandall, Linda Gordon, and Susan Reverby (eds.), *America's Working Women* (New York: Random House, 1976)* is a unique collection of documents and essays about women workers.

Philip S. Foner, *Organized Labor and the Black Worker, 1619-1973* (New York, 1974; 2nd ed., International Publishers)* is a good survey of another group of important but neglected working people.

Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital: The Degradation of Work in Twentieth Century America* (New York, 1974; 2nd ed., Monthly Review Press)* is one of the most important books of our time, because it explains the condition of the working class today with exceptional clarity.

CHAPTER I

SOURCES:

G. B. Warden, *Boston, 1689-1776* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970) provides a good overview of Boston's political economy before the Revolution, stressing problems created by British mercantilism and colonial commercialism.

James Henretta, "Economic Development and Social Structure in Colonial Boston," *William & Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 22 (1965), 75-92, and Allan Kulikoff, "The Progress of Inequality in Revolutionary Boston," *William & Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 28 (1971), 375-412, both present important statistical evidence documenting the widening gap between the rich and the poor in colonial Boston.

Mary Roys Baker, "Anglo-Massachusetts Trade Union Roots," *Labor History*, Vol. 14 (1973), 352-396, uncovers early trade unions in Massachusetts Bay and traces their British origins.

Benjamin Franklin, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin* (London, 1817; many paperback editions)* contains a fascinating recollection of Franklin's youth in Boston.

Arthur B. Tourtellot, *Benjamin Franklin, The Shaping of a Genius: The Boston Years* (New York:

Doubleday, 1977) is a finely written, detailed account of Franklin's years as a Boston apprentice which tells us something about the colony's early artisan community.

Bernard Bailyn, *The New England Merchants in the Seventeenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1955; 2nd ed., Harper Torchbooks)* examines the rise of the merchant capitalists in New England and describes the colonial mercantilist system.

Robert C. Twombly, "Black Resistance to Slavery in Massachusetts," in William L. O'Neill (ed.), *Insights and Parallels: Problems and Issues of American Social History* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Burgess, 1973) presents valuable information about Afro-American slaves in and around Boston.

Esther Forbes, *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941; 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin)* is one of the best books about the American Revolution available; it is also a beautifully written story of Paul Revere's life and his role in the artisan community of Boston.

Richard B. Morris, *Government and Labor in Early America* (New York, 1946; 2nd ed., Harper Torchbooks)* offers an important analysis of the effects of British mercantilism on labor relations, on indentured servants in the colonies, and on "concerted action among workers."

Alfred F. Young (ed.), *The American Revolution: Explorations in the History of American Radicalism* (DeKalb, Ill.: Northern Illinois University Press, 1976)* includes several excellent essays representing the latest scholarship on the social and economic history of the American Revolution. The essays of particular value are: Gary B. Nash, "Social Change and the Growth of Prerevolutionary Urban Radicalism"; Dirk Hoerder, "Boston Leaders and Boston Crowds, 1765-1776"; and Joan Hoff Wilson, "The Illusion of Change: Women and the American Revolution."

Jesse Lemisch, "Jack Tar in the Streets: Merchant Seamen in the Politics of Revolutionary America," *William & Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 25 (1968), 371-407, provocatively analyzes the role of sailors in the Revolution.

Hiller B. Zoebel, *The Boston Massacre* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1970)* presents a negative view of the crowd, quite different from Hoerder's (in Alfred F. Young).

Jesse Lemisch, "Radical Plot in Boston (1770): A Study in the Use of Evidence," *Harvard Law Review*, Vol. 84 (1970), 485-504, sharply attacks Zoebel's thesis that the Boston Massacre was the result of a plot hatched by radicals who were manipulating the mob.

Richard D. Brown, *Revolutionary Politics in Massachusetts: The Boston Committee of Correspondence and the Towns, 1772-1774* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970) is a detailed, scholarly study that includes some interesting information on how working people in Boston helped to organize against the British blockade and occupation.

Harold Kirker and James Kirker, *Bulfinch's Boston, 1787-1817* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1964) is a popularly written book about early Brahmin Boston that includes a political discussion (Chapter V) of how the conservative Federalists came to dominate the city.

Van Beck Hall, *Politics Without Parties: Massachusetts, 1780-1791* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1972) is a difficult, scholarly book that contains some information about how working people fared during the conservative counterrevolution in Boston politics, which followed Independence.

John R. Commons, et al. (eds.), *Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (New York, 1910; 2nd ed., Augustus M. Kelley)+ Vol. V, contains important documents in early Boston labor history including the declarations made during the ship carpenters' strike of 1825.

Seth Luther, "An Address to the Working-Men of New England" (1832) is reprinted in Leon Stein and Philip Taft (eds.), *Religion, Reform, and Revolution: Labor Panaceas in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Arno, 1969).+

Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians, The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967)* quotes Boston labor radicals such as Charles Douglas and Seth Luther on the growing conflict between the classes in the 1830s and offers a useful analysis of the political views of the first workingmen's parties.

Recommended for further reading:

Darrett B. Ruttman, *Winthrop's Boston: Portrait of a Puritan Town* (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 1965)* is a very detailed, scholarly study of how materialism and commercialism undermined Governor Winthrop's vision of Boston as "A Citty upon a Hill."

George Francis Dow, *Every Day Life in the Massachusetts Bay Colony* (New York: Blount, 1935) includes documentary information on working people's lives in the colony's earliest years.

Carl Bridenbaugh, *The Colonial Artisan* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955) offers a fine description of the early artisan trades.

Edmund S. and Helen M. Morgan, *The Stamp Act Crisis: Prologue to Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1953; 2nd ed., Collier Books)* is a superbly written

account of the events leading up to the Revolution in Boston.

John C. Miller, *Sam Adams, Pioneer in Propaganda* (Boston, 1936; 2nd ed., Stanford University Press)* is the most complete biography, but it may exaggerate Adams's ability to control the revolutionary crowds.

George P. Anderson, "Ebenezer Mackintosh: Stamp Act Rioter and Patriot," Colonial Society of Massachusetts *Publications*, Vol. 26 (1924-1926), 15-64, 348-361, provides little-known biographical information about one of the working-class heroes of the American Revolution.

Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of Opposition to Britain, 1765-1775* (New York, 1972; 2nd ed., Vintage)* includes fascinating information on crowd activity in Boston.

Philip S. Foner, *Labor and the American Revolution* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1976) is a useful survey that adopts a view quite different from that of Professor Maier.

David Montgomery, "The Working Classes of the Pre-Industrial American City, 1780-1830," *Labor History*, Vol. 9 (1968), 3-22, is important background reading for Chapters 1 and 2 of this book.

CHAPTER 2

SOURCES:

Edward Pessen, *Riches, Class and Power Before the Civil War* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1973) presents important statistics on the distribution of wealth in antebellum Boston.

Robert A. McCaughey, "From Town to City: Boston in the 1820's," *Political Science Quarterly*, Vol. 88 (1973), 191-213, offers a fine analysis of how communalism broke down and class conflict increased during Josiah Quincy's term as Boston's second mayor.

John R. Commons, et al. (eds.), *A Documentary History of American Industrial Society* (New York, 1910; 2nd ed., Augustus M. Kelley). Vol. VI contains very important documents in Boston labor history, including the statement of the ship carpenters' strike of 1832, the call to form the first city-wide trades' union, and the famous Ten Hour Circular (1835). Vol. V contains the 1830 platform of the Boston Workingmen's party.

Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians, The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1967)* refers frequently to the Boston labor movement of the 1830s and to the role of radicals like Seth Luther in that movement.

George E. McNeill (ed.), *The Labor Movement: The Problem of Today* (Boston and New York, 1886; 2nd ed. Augustus M. Kelley)+ includes an informative chapter on the struggle to shorten the hours of labor, with many references to Boston.

Norman Ware, *The Industrial Worker, 1840-1860* (Boston, 1924; 2nd ed., Quadrangle)* provides an interesting discussion of the "factory controversy" and the question of hours in antebellum Massachusetts.

Martin Green, *The Problem of Boston: Some Readings in Cultural History* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1966) is primarily concerned with the Brahmin world of high culture, but it comments on the effects industrial capitalism had upon the "Athens of America."

David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872* (New York, 1967; 2nd ed., Vintage)* makes a complex but exceedingly important argument about the failure of the Radical Republican-Labor Reform alliance during and after the Civil War. Much of Montgomery's analysis, especially of the crucial eight-hour-day issue, centers on Boston. Our account depends greatly upon Montgomery's excellent book.

Hyman Kurvitz, "Ira Steward and the Eight Hour Day," *Science & Society*, Vol. 22 (1956), 118-134, clearly reviews Steward's ideas.

Leon Stein and Philip Taft (eds.), *Religion, Reform and Revolution: Labor Panaceas in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Arno, 1969)+ reproduces Ira Steward's pamphlet on poverty, Wendell Phillips's comments to the National Labor Reform convention, and George McNeill's important *Report upon the Schooling and Hours of Labor of Children Employed in the Manufacturing and Mechanical Establishments of Massachusetts* (1875).

Philip S. Foner, "A Voice for Black Equality: *The Boston Daily Evening Voice*, 1864-1867," *Science & Society*, Vol. 38 (1974), 304-325, discusses Boston's excellent Civil War labor newspaper.

Jeremy Brecher, *Strike! The True History of Mass Insurgence in America* (San Francisco, 1972; 2nd ed., Fawcett)* is an exciting, controversial book that briefly describes the tumultuous events of 1886 in Boston and other cities.

Geoffrey T. Blodgett, "Josiah Quincy, Brahmin Democrat," *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 38 (1965), 435-453, is a nicely written sketch of Boston's mayor of the 1890s, whose reforms helped keep labor loyal to the Democratic party.

Recommended for further reading:

Karl Marx, *Capital* (Chicago, 1906; International Publishers).* Vol. 1, Part III, Chapter X, "The Work-

ing Day," is a classic study of the struggle for a normal working day in England, which has many parallels with the American struggle centering in Boston.

Marion Cahill, *Shorter Hours: A Study of the Movement Since the Civil War* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1932) provides an overview of the struggle for the eight-hour day in the United States.

CHAPTER 3

SOURCES:

Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants* (Cambridge, Mass., 1941; 2nd ed., Atheneum, 1968)* is a pioneering study of immigration to Boston, focusing on the physical, social, and political environments of nineteenth-century Boston, and how the Irish in particular adapted to those environments.

George O'Brien, *Economic History of Ireland from the Union to the Famine* (London: Longmans, Green, 1921) is a detailed economic history of Ireland, which is particularly helpful for information on peasant responses to the economic policies of British colonialism.

Roger Lane, *Policing the City: Boston 1822-1885* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967; 2nd ed., Atheneum)* presents information on Boston's Yankee police force and the methods used to deal with Irish immigrant offenders.

Overseers of the Poor, *Abstracts of the Reports of the Overseers of the Poor of the Several Cities and Towns of this Commonwealth, 1845-1850* (Boston, 1851) documents the problems which Boston and the commonwealth encountered in meeting the welfare needs of immigrant Irish paupers.

Lemuel Shattuck, *Commission Appointed Under a Resolve of the Legislature of Massachusetts Relating to a Sanitary Survey of the State. Report of A General Plan for the Promotion of Public and Personal Health* (Boston, 1850) is a detailed survey of public health, sanitation, and water systems in Massachusetts' growing cities.

E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (London, 1963; 2nd ed., Vintage).* Chapter XII offers a fascinating account of the role of the Irish in the making of the English working class. This pioneering Marxist study of British workers has had a profound influence on the writing of United States social history.

Geoffrey Blodgett, *The Gentle Reformers: Massachusetts Democrats in the Cleveland Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1966) is a fine historical study of Yankee reformers in late nineteenth-century Massachusetts and how they related to emerging Irish bosses.

David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality—Labor and the Radical Republicans 1862-1872* (New York, 1967; 2nd ed., Vintage)* explains how Boston Irish emerged from the ghetto to ally with radicals and reformers during the Civil War period. An excellent source of information about figures such as Guiney and Collins.

Recommended for further reading:

Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger* (London: *Times Mirror*, 1962; 2nd ed., Harper)* provides a readable study of the Irish famine, documenting the suffering of the Irish peasantry, the economics of British imperialism, and the relief efforts England made to cope with the crisis.

Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution in Ireland 1850-1875," *American Historical Review*, Vol. 77, No. 3 (1972), 625-652, is an important study on the growth of devotion to Roman Catholicism in Ireland during the Irish famine, suggesting that Catholicism was not vital to the peasantry until the famine.

Galen Broeker, *Rural Disorder and Police Reform in Ireland, 1812-1836* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1970) is a study of peasant resistance to the economic and political policies of British colonialism in Ireland.

J. C. Beckett, *The Making of Modern Ireland, 1602-1923* (London: Faber, 1969)* is a comprehensive historical study of Ireland from 1602 to the Free State.

Ray Allen Billington, *The Protestant Crusade, 1800-1860* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1964)* studies nativism in Jacksonian and antebellum America, and presents information on nativist-immigrant conflicts in Boston.

Madeline Rice, *American Catholic Opinion and the Slavery Controversy* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944) documents and discusses the development of the Catholic hierarchy's position on slavery in antebellum America.

Donna Merwick, *Boston's Priests, 1848-1910: A Study in Intellectual and Social Change* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1973) is a historical study of the influence immigrants exerted on the Catholic church in Boston.

Henry Steele Commager, *Theodore Parker* (Boston, 1936; Beacon Press, 1960).* Because Unitarian minister Theodore Parker devoted a large part of his ministry to the poor, several chapters of Commager's biography deal with Parker's concern for the immigrant Irish and the minister's criticism of the capitalist marketplace.

David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social*

Order and Disorder in the New Republic (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971)* is an innovative study of prisons and the penal system of Jacksonian America, and contains information on Irish immigrants in Massachusetts prisons.

Richard Harmond, "'The Beast in Boston': Benjamin F. Butler as Governor of Massachusetts," *Journal of American History*, Vol. 55 (1968), 266-280, describes Butler's appeal to Irish voters and his exposes of Yankee institutions.

CHAPTER 4

SOURCES:

Robert A. Woods (ed.), *The City Wilderness, A Settlement House Study by Residents and Associates of the South End House* (Boston, 1898; 2nd ed., Arno Press)+ is a pathbreaking social study by settlement-house workers of the city's multiracial, rooming-house districts, which reveals almost as much about the prejudices of Yankee reformers as it does about the lives of immigrant workers.

Robert A. Woods (ed.), *Americans in Process* (Boston, 1903; 2nd ed., Arno Press)+ is a settlement-house study of the North and West ends, documenting the residential patterns, occupational roles, and neighborhood conditions of immigrants and workers in these two urban communities.

Robert A. Woods and A. J. Kennedy (eds.), *The Zone of Emergence: Observations of Lower Middle and Upper Working Class Communities in Boston, 1905-1914*, abridged and edited with a preface by Sam Bass Warner, Jr. (Cambridge, Mass.: M.I.T. Press, 1962)* is a continuation of the settlement-house studies, focusing on newer working-class communities in early twentieth-century Boston—Cambridgeport, South Boston, Dorchester, Roxbury and Brighton.

Rosewell F. Phelps, *South End Factory Operatives: Employment and Residence* (Boston: South End House, 1903) provides useful statistics about workers' need to live close to their jobs.

David Ward, "Industrial Evolution and the Emergence of Boston's Central Business District," *Economic Geography*, Vol. 42 (1966), 152-171, presents an important view of Boston's changing industrial landscape.

Carroll Wright, *The Working Girls of Boston* (Boston, 1889; 2nd ed., Arno Press)+ is a survey sponsored by the Massachusetts Bureau of Labor Statistics that explores the working and living conditions of women in Boston dealing primarily with retail, clerical, and unskilled workers.

Walter Firey, *Land Use in Central Boston* (Cambridge, Mass., 1947; 2nd ed., Arno Press)+ discusses the effects of land use on the configuration and consciousness of a number of inner-city communities, including Beacon Hill, the South End, and the North End.

Stephan Thernstrom, *The Other Bostonians: Poverty and Progress in the American Metropolis, 1880-1970* (Cambridge, Mass.; 1973; 2nd ed., Harvard University Press)* is a large-scale statistical study of occupational mobility among immigrants, documenting the differing rates of mobility among and within immigrant groups across several generations.

William Foote Whyte, "Race Conflicts in the North End," *New England Quarterly*, Vol. 12 (1939), 623-642, offers a fascinating account of the violent conflicts between Irish and Italian immigrants in the North End.

Mary Antin, *The Promised Land* (Boston, 1912; 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin)* is a first-person account of growing up in the South End's Russian-Jewish community by an intellectually gifted woman, who recounts community life with attention to the fragmentation of traditional customs and habits.

Barbara Miller Solomon, *Ancestors and Immigrants: A Changing New England Tradition* (Cambridge, Mass., 1956; 2nd ed., McGraw-Hill)* is a study of Brahmin and elite attitudes toward immigration restriction at the turn of the century and how these attitudes were reflected in the formation of an Immigration Restriction League.

Herbert Gans, *The Urban Villagers* (New York, 1962; 2nd ed., Free Press)* is an outstanding study of Boston's predominantly Italian West End community, which assesses the strengths and weakness of the ethnic "peer group society" among working-class urbanites.

James R. Green, *The South End* (Boston: Boston 200, 1976)* is an oral history of the South End from which some of the interviews in our chapter are drawn.

Elizabeth Hafkin Pleck, *Hunting for a City: Black Migration and Poverty in Boston, 1865-1900* (New York, Academic Press, 1979) is an outstanding social history of black Boston.

Sam Bass Warner, *Street Car Suburbs* (Cambridge, Mass., 1962; 2nd ed., Atheneum)* explores the development of streetcar suburbs in the Boston area and examines the important social consequences of nineteenth-century suburbanization.

Recommended for further reading:

Marvin Lazerson, *Origins of the Urban School: Public Education in Massachusetts, 1870-1915* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971) is a detailed analysis of how public schools and

Americanization programs served to socialize workers and prepare them for wage labor.

Allen F. Davis, *Spearheads of Reform: The Social Settlements and the Progressive Movement, 1890-1914* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967)* is a survey of the settlement-house movement in the so-called progressive era of 1900-1920 that includes an analysis of the work done by Robert Woods and his Boston associates.

CHAPTER 5

SOURCES:

Joseph Dineen, *Ward Eight* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1936) is a novel based on the political career of Martin Lomasney, and contains information, insights, and portraits of the Irish immigrant community in the West End from the turn of the century to the Depression.

Geoffrey Blodgett, *The Gentle Reformers: Massachusetts Democrats in the Cleveland Era* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1936) is a historical study of political and social reformers in late nineteenth-century Massachusetts, containing valuable information on trade unions, local political bosses, and Boston reformers, especially Mayor Josiah Quincy.

Robert A. Woods (ed.), *The City Wilderness: A Settlement House Study by Residents and Associates of the South End House* (Boston, 1898; 2nd ed., Arno Press)+ is especially valuable for Woods's analysis of ward bosses, whom he opposed, and the growing trade unions, which he favored as important agents of Americanization.

James Michael Curley, *I'd Do It Again—A Record of All My Uproarious Years* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1957) is a wonderfully entertaining account of Curley's rise out of the Irish working-class ghetto and his epic battles with Brahmins on the one hand and rival Irish bosses on the other.

Robert A. Christie, *Empire in Wood: A History of the United Brotherhood of Carpenters and Joiners* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1957) contains a fascinating analysis of the rise of business agents such as Boston's Harry Lloyd, and the decline of socialist unionism espoused by Patrick Maguire.

Philip S. Foner, *The Policies and Practices of the American Federation of Labor 1900-1909* (New York, 1964; 2nd ed., International)* is the best introduction to the problems of the AFL's brand of business unionism; it may be too critical of unions but it does clearly identify the evils of craftism, sexism, racism, and corruption in the Gompers era.

Edwin Fenton, *Immigrants and Unions, A Case Study: Italians and American Labor* (Cambridge, Mass., 1957; 2nd ed., Arno Press)+ assembles hard-to-find information about Italian workers and unions in Boston and reviews the career of Dominic D'Alessandro.

Sam Romer, *The International Brotherhood of Teamsters* (New York: Wiley, 1962) includes a review of Dan Tobin's rise to the top of the Teamsters' Union after beginning as a business agent in Boston.

Robin Miller Jacoby, "The Women's Trade Union League and American Feminism," in Milton Cantor and Bruce Laurie, (eds.), *Class, Sex, and the Woman Worker* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1977) offers a re-interpretation of the WTUL's significance for the contemporary women's movement.

Albert M. Heintz and John R. Whitney with Lincoln Fairley, *History of the Massachusetts State Federation of Labor 1887-1935* (Worcester, Mass.: Labor News, 1935) chronicles the history of organized labor in the commonwealth, and is particularly helpful on legislative action by the Massachusetts State Federation of Labor.

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Richard Abrams, *Conservatism in a Progressive Era: Massachusetts Politics, 1900-1912* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1964) presents a detailed political history of the commonwealth in the progressive era that contains some insights into the role played by Boston trade unions in urban politics.

Arthur Mann, *Yankee Reformers in the Urban Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1954; 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press)* is a useful collection of essays about Boston radicals and reformers around the turn of the century, and contains an informative chapter on Frank Foster.

Howard Quint, *Forging of American Socialism* (South Carolina, 1953; 2nd ed., Bobbs-Merrill)* is a survey of the socialist movement in the United States during the late nineteenth century that contains information about the first Nationalist Club in Boston, founded by the socialist followers of Edward Bellamy.

Recommended for further reading:

Henry F. Bedford, *Socialism and the Workers in Massachusetts, 1886-1912* (Amherst, Mass.: University of Massachusetts Press, 1966) presents detailed information about the Massachusetts socialist movement around the turn of the century and is particularly useful in describing the shoe workers of Haverhill and Brockton who elected socialist mayors in the late 1890s.

Edward Bellamy, *Looking Backward, 2000-1887* (Boston, 1887, many paperback editions)* is the famous utopian novel describing Boston in the year 2000 as a cooperative community which organized itself to get rid of the destructive effects of competitive capitalism—a Bible to a whole generation of Boston radicals and reformers.

Leslie G. Ainley, *Boston Mahatma* (Boston: Bruce Humphries, 1949) is a biography of Ward 8 boss Martin Lomasney.

John Henry Cutler, *"Honey Fitz," Three Steps to the White House: The Life and Times of John F. "Honey Fitz" Fitzgerald* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949) describes the life of the North End boss who rose to become Boston's mayor and the scourge of Yankee reformers.

Joseph F. Dineen, *The Purple Shamrock: The Hon. James Michael Curley of Boston* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1949) is a good biography that should be read in conjunction with Curley's colorful autobiography.

William Shannon, *The American Irish* (New York, 1966; 2nd ed., Collier-Macmillan, 1974)+ is an accessible survey of the Irish in the United States, and contains interesting discussions of the Irish political bosses and municipal government.

Lincoln Steffens, *The Shame of the Cities* (New York, 1904; 2nd ed., Hill and Wang)* is a classic muckraking study of municipal politics that has an interesting chapter on Boston politics and Martin Lomasney.

Frederic Cople Jaher, "The Boston Brahmins in the Age of Industrial Capitalism," in F. C. Jaher (ed.), *The Age of Industrialism in America* (New York: Macmillan Free Press, 1968) is a literary essay on the attitudes of Brahmin intellectuals toward the rise of industrial capitalism in Boston, and the related growth of immigration and bossism.

Joyce Kornbluh (ed.), *Rebel Voices: An I.W.W. Anthology* (Ann Arbor, Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1964)* is a colorful collection of material about the Industrial Workers of the World which contains a good chapter on the Lawrence, Massachusetts, textile strike in 1912.

Samuel P. Hays, "The Politics of Reform in Municipal Government in the Progressive Era," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 60 (1964), 157-169, is a critical analysis of how municipal reforms, like the at-large system of elections, were designed by business and professional interests to deprive working-class voters of representation. Reprinted in Stanley N. Katz and Stanley I. Kutler (eds.), *New Perspectives on the American Past*, Vol. II (Boston: Little Brown, 1969).*

CHAPTER 6

SOURCES:

Selig Perlman and Philip Taft, *History of Labor in the United States, 1896-1932* (New York, 1935; 2nd ed., Augustus M. Kelley)+ is an extremely well-written, comprehensive history of trade unions that includes good accounts of the Boston police and telephone workers' strikes of 1919.

Theodore Draper, *The Roots of American Communism* (New York, 1957; 2nd ed., Viking)* provides a good deal of information about Louis Fraina and the Boston Communists, though it contains little about the Lettish workers in the city who led the Communist movement.

Francis Russell, *A City in Terror—1919—The Boston Police Strike* (New York, 1975; 2nd ed., Viking)* is the most detailed account of the great "cop out," but it is not sympathetic to the striking policemen.

Robert K. Murray, *The Red Scare: A Study in National Hysteria, 1919-1920* (Minneapolis, 1955; 2nd ed., McGraw-Hill)* accounts for the suppression of the Left in Massachusetts during the Red raids and the reign of terror that followed.

Felix Frankfurter, *The Case of Sacco-Vanzetti* (Boston, 1927; 2nd ed., Grosset Universal Library)* is a devastating expose of the legal injustices of the case.

Francis Russell, *Tragedy at Dedham: The Story of the Sacco-Vanzetti Case* (New York, 1962; 2nd ed., McGraw-Hill)* presents a lengthy account of the case and concludes that Sacco and Vanzetti were guilty.

Roberta Strauss Feuerlicht, *Justice Crucified: The Story of Sacco and Vanzetti* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1977) is the latest history of the case; its author finds Sacco and Vanzetti innocent but errs in arguing that they were prosecuted for being immigrants and not for being anarchists.

Marion D. Frankfurter and Gardner Jackson (eds.), *The Letters of Sacco and Vanzetti* (New York: Viking, 1928) brings together moving political and personal statements by the two anarchist workers.

Recommended for further reading:

Irving Bernstein, *The Lean Years: A History of the American Worker, 1920-1933* (Boston, 1960; 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin)* is an outstanding history of workers in the troubled years of the Roaring Twenties, when the labor movement was being crushed.

CHAPTER 7

SOURCES:

Charles H. Trout, *Boston, The Great Depression and the New Deal* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1977) is a fine history of Boston during the 1930s from which much of the information in our chapter has been derived.

Sari Roboff, *Labor in Boston: An Oral History of Work and Union Organizing* (Boston: Boston 200, 1977)* is a priceless source of information about the city's workers, especially during the 1930s and 1940s, and it is from this source that we were able to take many of the quotations that appear in our chapter.

George Charney, *A Long Journey* (Chicago: Quadrangle, 1963) features a fascinating reminiscence (Chapter IV) by the New England district organizer of the Communist party during the early 1930s.

Seaton Wesley Manning, "Negro Trade Unionists in Boston," *Social Forces*, Vol. 27 (1938), 256-266, criticizes the exclusion of blacks from the AFL unions and expresses cautious optimism about the interracial policies of the new CIO unions.

Recommended for further reading:

William Foote Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago, 1943; 2nd ed., University of Chicago Press, 1973)* is a sociological study of Boston's North End Italian community in the 1930s, and offers some insights into working-class culture in this period.

Irving Bernstein, *The Turbulent Years: A History of the American Worker, 1933-1941* (Boston, 1970; 2nd ed., Houghton Mifflin)* is a very long but exciting account of labor struggles and labor politics in the 1930s.

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